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INSIDE THE CRIMSON TIDE

SEPTEMBER, 2000

VOLUME 22, NUMBER 7

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Saleem Rasheed

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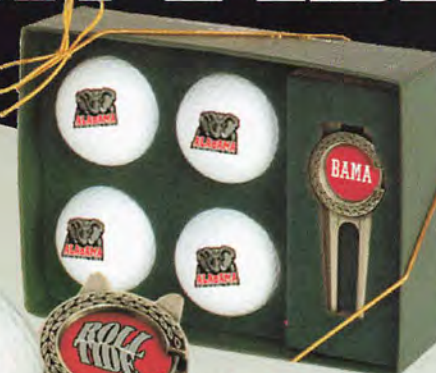


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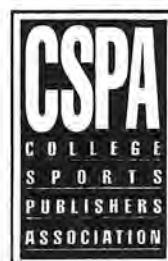
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A service of 'BAMA Magazine
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Publishing Information

'BAMA, INSIDE THE CRIMSON TIDE
(USPS 489-470; ISSN 0195-0975) is pub-
lished monthly for ten months from August
to May by College Sports Publications, Inc.,
2116 8th Street, Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35401.
Editorial office is located at 2116 8th Street,
Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35401-2134.

POSTMASTER: Send change of address
to 'BAMA, INSIDE THE CRIMSON
TIDE, P.O. Box 866104, Tuscaloosa, AL
35486-0054.

Periodicals postage paid at Tuscaloosa,
Alabama, and at additional mailing office.
Subscription rate is \$35.00 per year. Foreign
subscriptions \$10.00 per additional. Change
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INSIDE THE CRIMSON TIDE

SEPTEMBER, 2000

VOLUME 22, NUMBER 7

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Barry Fikes Photo



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The 2000 edition of the Crimson Tide is nearing kickoff. Pre-season polls have given Alabama high expectations. Preparation has generally been good as Bama prepares for a difficult schedule that, hopefully, will lead to another championship.
by Kirk McNair

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It appears that no hurdle is too great for sophomore linebacker Saleem Rasheed. He proved in his first year at Alabama that he is exceptional in every way, and particularly on the football field, where his play has him on pre-season All-America checklists this season.
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Bama Has Reason For High Hopes

by Kirk McNair

Good nucleus of returning players helped by additions

Is this one of those years? Alabama has earned the right to have high football expectations, and this year those hopes are fueled by last year's surprising Southeastern Conference championship run and eighth place national finish. With major polls placing the Crimson Tide among the country's top three teams in pre-season rankings, it's understandable that National Championship is in Bama thoughts.

But if this is to be a championship journey, it begins with a difficult first step. Among the factors in a football season is the quality of the opposition. Playing in the SEC guarantees Alabama a difficult schedule, and this year Bama has upped the ante by opening the season against one of the nation's "name" teams, UCLA. Moreover, the Tide will play the Bruins on their home turf, which is the Rose Bowl in Pasadena.

There are interesting notes surrounding this opener. One is the site, where Alabama's early reputation was built beginning in the 1920s. And it was Alabama that was the last team outside the Pac-10 and Big 10 to play in the event, Bama's 1945 team destroying Southern Cal, 34-14, in the 1946 Rose Bowl. Two All-America players on that team, tailback Harry Gilmer and center Vaughn Mancha, will accompany the Tide to Pasadena this year. And Gilmer and Mancha will be among a tremendous throng of Alabama faithful following the Tide to the West Coast, estimates of as many as 25,000.

Reports from Los Angeles indicate an improved UCLA team. Last year the Bruins of Coach Bob Toledo fell to a 4-7 record after having been the Rose Bowl representative the two previous seasons. The problems at Westwood last fall were in large part the result of injuries, but UCLA has a short history of being a poor defensive team.



Although Alabama Head Coach Mike DuBose may not always smile at practice, this year's Crimson Tide team has the potential to make this a very pleasant season. Barry Fikes Photo

This year in pre-season practice the UCLA defense, led by end Kenyon Coleman, has been reported as much improved against the run, but still vulnerable to the pass. On the offensive side, a pair of sophomore quarterbacks, Ryan McCann and Cory Paus, are both likely to get playing time, and they'll be looking for tall wide receivers.

In an opening game, coaches have little to go on in preparation. Alabama Head Coach Mike DuBose and his staff know there will be surprises from UCLA. While most time in pre-season is spent honing the fundamental skills of Tide players, a few extra days of preparation will go into trying to prepare for the unexpected.

Still, DuBose will be pleased if he can go to California with most questions an-

swered about his own team without regard to what UCLA might do.

On offense, fan interest is primarily on the quarterback position, even though DuBose feels very secure in that key position. Andrew Zow, the junior who has started for a year and a half, is the number one quarterback. His back-up is sophomore Tyler Watts, who has proved that he can win on Saturdays, but who has not been able to overtake (or even catch) Zow in practice.

DuBose has been more concerned about the intangibles than the physical. He is interested in seeing leadership, particularly from his seniors.

Still, even with nine starters and a number of back-ups returning on offense, there are questions. And they concern the vacancies created by graduations from the 1999 team that went 10-3.

A number of college football teams this year will not have a running back the quality of Shaun Alexander, last year's Alabama star. However, most teams will have a tailback with more experience (and, perhaps, skill) than will Bama. One reason for concern at the halfback spot is that none of the available runners have proved themselves to be adept as receivers. Santonio Beard is a good receiver and would be in the thick of the battle, but after recovering from off-season knee surgery, Beard suffered a shoulder injury that has sidelined him. Brandon Miree has been the most impressive runner in practice, but he has not approached the skill of Alexander and his deficiencies in some areas may relegate him to a back-up role. Ahmaad Galloway was clearly the best in the spring, but Shaun Bohanon, Alexander's little-used back-up last fall, wasn't practicing in the spring. Bohanon is academically eligible and battling his way back towards the top of the depth chart.

Alabama came close to having academic disaster in the backfield. Back-up fullback Marvin Brown will sit out this year because he is ineligible (he can practice, but not play), but Dustin McClintock did attain eligibility for his final season. Although Theo Sanders, a former tight end, is the theoretical back-up fullback, the back-up probably won't be used much unless McClintock is injured, Bama will frequently play without a fullback, using an extra tight end instead.

Although the Tide continues to talk more about using the tight end than actually using him (based on early pre-season practices), there is a feeling that Terry Jones and Shawn Draper will be more active as pass receivers in this year's offense. Both are very good blockers and when Bama is in a two tight-end set the opposing defense will have to be prepared for the run. One problem: Bama likes to employ a lot of double tight end formations, but to do that more than two tight ends are needed. The best of the back-ups in the early going was undersized David Cavan (6-5, 240), a freshman walk-on. Casey Gilbert has returned to tight end, but he reported back out of shape.

The other loss from last year's offense was one of the best linemen in Alabama history, left tackle Chris Samuels. Dante Ellington, last year's starting right tackle



No one is surprised that Alabama once again has helped its football team with an excellent recruiting class. One of the most impressive of the newcomers has been freshman wide receiver Triandos Luke.

Barry Fikes Photo

as a freshman, has moved to the left side and, after a disappointing spring, seems to be getting the hang of things at that important position. (With Zow, who is not very mobile, at quarterback, the left tackle spot takes on added responsibility.) Ellington's move to left tackle means Bama has to fill the right tackle spot, and to do that DuBose may have to shift Will

Cuthbert from his right guard spot. Cuthbert played right tackle in 1998 and right guard Dennis Alexander seemed to have earned a spot in the line. However, when Alexander suffered a knee sprain, Bama had to put Cuthbert back at guard and reinstall Lannis Baxley, who has not been impressive in pre-season work, at right tackle.

Good news in the offensive line is that back-up guard Marico Portis has done well and will back up both Griff Redmill and the right guard and that Alonzo Ephraim is coming along behind All-SEC center Paul Hogan.

Like richness and thinness, DuBose says you can't have too many wide receivers, at least if you are running the Alabama offense. And Bama does appear to have a bountiful supply of quality receivers. It starts with the three returning stars from last year, Freddie Milons, Jason McAddley and Antonio "A.C." Carter. Newcomers Triandos Luke and Dre Fulgham have been very impressive. Sam Collins, little-used last year, has been excellent. A surprise in this group could be walk-on senior Jeremy Taylor, the former Crimson Tide track star who is giving football a try now that his track eligibility has expired.

The Tide defense also returns nine starters from last year, but one thing that seems to be making this a very strong group is the number of talented newcomers. DuBose admitted that

at some positions, notably defensive end, that there hadn't been enough time to give everyone enough work because there are so many capable of playing.

Rare is the college football team that is not short on defensive linemen. Alabama coaches may wish for a few more, but the fact is that the Crimson Tide has far more than its fair share. And it is not just quantity. These are quality players.

The three returning starters from last year are the foundation. Ends Kindal Moorehead (left) and Kenny King and left tackle Kenny Smith have all-star potential. It appears there will be a fourth "K" on the defensive front line, senior tackle Kelvis White, an over-achieving type. The utility man of the front is Jarret Johnson, whose best position is defensive end, but who is strong enough to man a tackle spot. Todd Whitmore, a returning back-up player, will see playing time at tackle. Sam Matthews, whose knees continue to plague him, may be a contributor later in the year, but has missed the pre-season.

Beyond that, a large handful of newcomers give Bama depth up front. The fifth

tackle will be either freshman Albert Means (overweight and out of shape, but still devastating for a few plays) or surprising walk-on junior college transfer David Daniel. (It's too bad that freshman Anthony Bryant is a partial qualifier, able to practice but unable to participate in games this year. He'd be in contention for a first string spot.)

One of the most outstanding freshmen is defensive end Antwan Odom, and he'll be the top back-up on the right side. Aries Monroe had been tried at middle linebacker in the spring, but he's now playing at right end. Although he's got the quickness to be a rush end specialist, he has the strength to play every down. Two ends who have shown flashes, but who haven't gotten much work, are freshman Gerard Clark and junior college transfer Shawn Oglesby. Although Oglesby might look like a redshirt candidate since he is a bit undersized at about 225, he has excellent quickness as a pass-rusher and for special teams work. A late edition to the defensive line corps is Nautyn McKay-Loescher of Toronto, Canada. Although he was late getting started because of "paperwork," in his first drills he showed that quick first step that had DuBose so excited when the coach saw McKay-Loescher on videotape.

The bad news at linebacker is that Marvin Constant's comeback is going slower than hoped for. Constant was injured late last season and is rehabilitating from major surgery. The good news is that Victor Ellis has led the way as players have stepped up to fill the void at middle linebacker. Ellis, who did well in the spring to hold off the challenge of Monroe, has gained the confidence of DuBose to be a solid defender. And a freshman, Donnie Lowe, has been impressive enough that he's a solid back-up. Adam Cox has moved over from outside linebacker to add depth in the middle.

The outside spots have outstanding starters returning, Saleem Rasheed on the left side, Darius Gilbert on the right side. And freshmen are providing most of the depth at the outside spots with Cornelius Wortham and Jason Rawls behind Rasheed and Brooks Daniels, who was moved from strong safety, backing up Gilbert. Leslie Williams, a former back-up defensive end, is now being tried at outside linebacker.

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One reason Daniels was able to move to linebacker was the outstanding play of two new safeties, freshman Thurman Ward and junior college transfer Connie Brown. They join returning starters Reggie Myles and Marcus Spencer and former starter Tony Dixon to give Alabama five reliable men at the two safety spots.

Alabama also has its starters back at cornerback, and depth appears better this year. Milo Lewis on the left side and Gerald Dixon at right cornerback both show improvement, but the most improved cornerback unquestionably is Hirschel Bolden. Shontua Ray and the often-maligned Kecal Bailey have been solid. Newcomers Ray Hudson, Carlos Andrews and Chris James have all done well.

DuBose believes one reason Alabama will have better special teams play this year than in the past is the increased speed brought to the team by the newcomers. Still, when one thinks of special teams the first thought is of the kickers, punters and place-kickers. It is not unreasonable to suggest that special teams have been comparatively weak in the DuBose era, and the emphasis on that area in the pre-season is indication of the resolve to strengthen it.

Still, it is difficult to have impressive special teams play when kicking is not good. A new punter was brought in for pre-season practices, but he has not been able to displace the best candidate from last spring. There is still hope that one or two additions to the team this fall can strengthen the place-kicking work.

Former Tide Coach Gene Stallings told a great story about a Bama place-kicking candidate telling Stallings that the coach made the kicker nervous by watching him in practice. Stallings said he told the youngster, "Well, I plan to be at every game." DuBose also likes to test his kickers in pressure situations during scrimmages. Thus far, the results have been disappointing.

While working alone, returning punter Lane Bearden and freshman Matt Sanders can boom them. But in scrimmage work they have been average on their good kicks, and not consistent enough to have all average boots. Bearden, who also kicks off, has been slightly better.

Place-kicking has not been good, even though DuBose believes any of three in camp could get the job done. Newcomer Neal Thomas, added to the pre-season squad when tailback/linebacker Harold James was late gaining admission to The University, appeared to be moving ahead for the job when he suffered a knee injury. Among the returning candidates, Chris Kemp has been more consistent than strong-legged Danny Haynes.

Ideally, Alabama will get a lot of punt return opportunities this year, and Freddie Milons is expected to handle that work. By the same token, Bama would like to be the recipient of very few kickoff returns. But when those occur, Milons is also likely to be one of the deep men. Other candidates for kickoff return work are Arvin Richard (now a back-up tailback after a year at wide receiver), ex-trackman Jeremy Taylor, Shontua Ray and Roberto McBride (who was taken off scholarship this year, but who remains on the team).

Although snapping has not been great,

Bradley Ledbetter does appear to have that job again. Jonathan Richey, the walk-on third team quarterback, will hold.

TIDE NOTES: Alabama will be in white jerseys for the opening game at UCLA. The Bruins wear their blue jerseys as home team. Bama planned to leave for Los Angeles following practice in Tuscaloosa on Thursday, August 31, and work out in California on Friday, September 1.

With the announcement that BYU Coach LaVell Edwards will retire at the end of the season, there has been speculation Bama Quarterbacks Coach Charlie Stubbs, a former graduate assistant at BYU, could be in the coaching picture at his alma mater. DuBose said he wanted whatever is best for Stubbs and added, "He'll put our team goals ahead of his individual goals until the appropriate time."

Ray Marshall, a little-used lineman from Montevallo, has elected to transfer to Jacksonville State.

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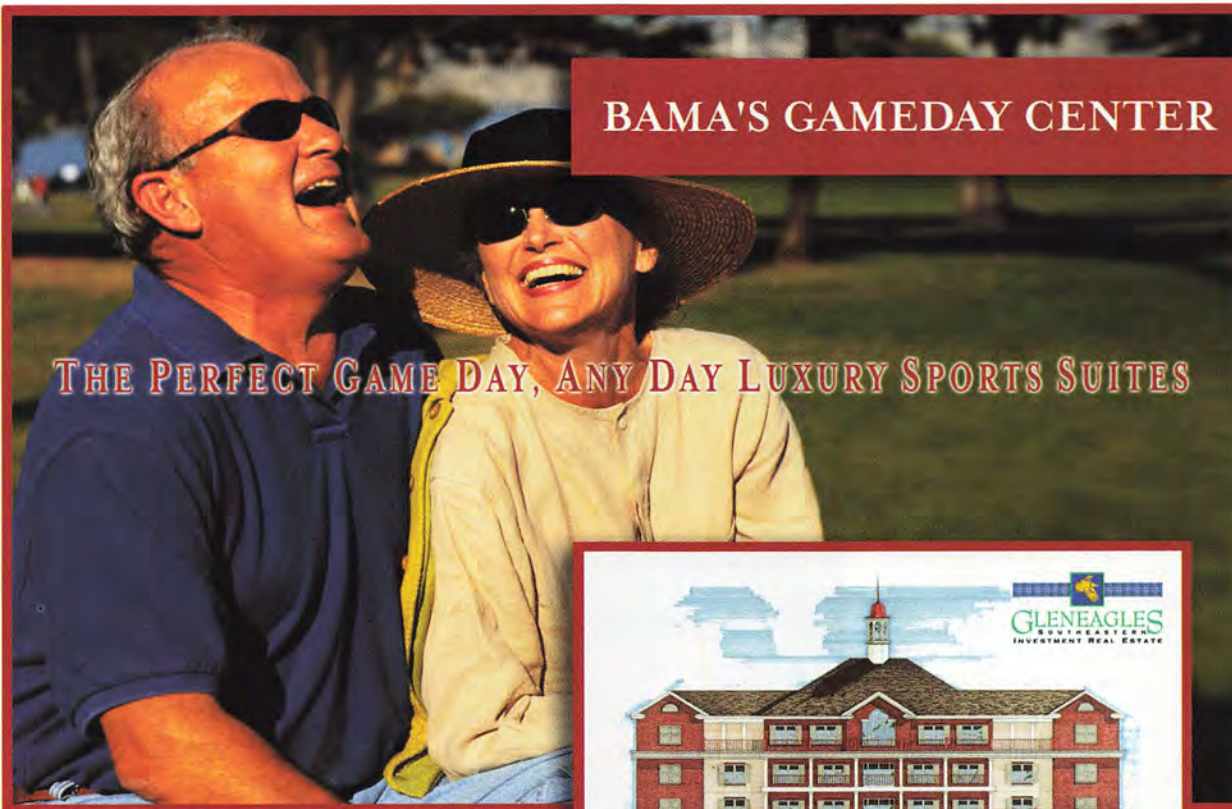


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2000 Alabama Football Roster

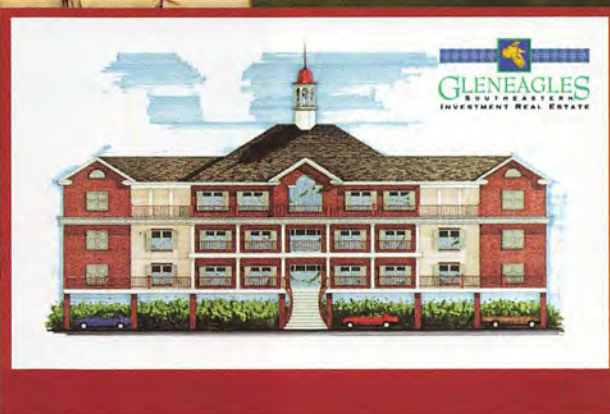
(This roster may not include every player, but does include all 105 reporting for practices prior to the beginning of classes on August 23)

No	Name, Pos	Hgt	Wgt	Cl	Exp	Hometown	No	Name, Pos	Hgt	Wgt	Cl	Exp	Hometown
1	Thurman Ward, S	6-2	190	Fr	HS	Starkville, Miss.	43	Jason Rawls, RLB	6-1	215	Fr	HS	Statesboro, Ga.
2	Antonio Carter, FL	5-9	190	So	1L	Tallahassee	43	Matt Summerford, MLB	6-2	210	Fr	Sq	Oneonta
3	Dre Fulgham, SE	6-2	205	Fr	HS	Montevallo	44	Lane Bearden, P	6-0	180	So	1L	Helena
3	Jason Kellen, P	6-4	219	Sr	Sq	Tuscaloosa	45	Marvin Constant, MLB	6-1	245	So	1L	Tuscaloosa
4	Gerald Dixon, LCB	5-11	185	So	1L	Burtonsville, Md.	46	Theo Sanders, FB/TE	6-3	248	So	Sq	Birmingham
4	Scott Crouch, QB	6-4	215	Fr	HS	Navarre, Fla.	46	John Fielding, FS	6-3	188	Jr	Sq	Augusta, Ga.
4	Ricky Shoop, PK	5-9	175	Jr	Sq	Shannon, Miss.	46	John Caldwell, TB	5-11	190	Fr	RS	Hoover
5	Andrew Zow, QB	6-2	217	Jr	2L	Lake Butler, Fla.	47	Danny Haynes, PK	5-10	200	Fr	RS	Killen
5	Eric Moore, RCB	5-10	180	So	Sq	Mobile	47	Stanley Jackson, OLB	6-4	241	Jr	Sq	Auburn
6	Marvin Brown, FB	6-0	252	Jr	2L	Hyattsville, Md.	48	Leslie Williams, RLB	6-5	235	So	Sq	Stone Mtn., Ga.
7	Sam Collins, SE	6-1	184	So	1L	Fayette	49	Donnie Lowe, MLB	6-2	245	Fr	HS	LaVergne, Tenn.
7	Waine Bacon, LCB	5-10	170	So	Sq	Forrestville, Md.	56	Chauvon McFadden, LDE	6-3	274	Jr	Sq	Herndon, Va.
8	Derrick Woods, WR	5-11	184	Fr	HS	Memphis	49	Jason Williams, FB	5-11	240	Fr	RS	Fairhope
8	Chad Barron, PK	6-2	209	Jr	Sq	Marietta, Ga	50	Nick Ridings, SN	6-0	241	Fr	RS	Marietta, Ga.
9	Victor Ellis, MLB	6-2	231	Jr	2L	Chattanooga	51	Evan Mathis, C	6-6	276	Fr	HS	Homewood
9	Mark Miller, QB	6-1	200	Fr	RS	Gadsden	51	Allen Hollie, LDT	6-0	272	Jr	Sq	Atlanta, Ga.
10	Carlos Andrews, LCB	6-0	200	Fr	HS	Tallahassee	52	Corey Bryan, RLB	6-1	224	Jr	Sq	Andalusia
10	Jeff Eller, WR	6-1	180	Jr	Sq	Pelham	53	Rob Saucier, RLB	5-10	220	So	Sq	Mobile
10	Kyler O'Neill, FS	6-1	180	Fr	RS	Birmingham	53	Pat Hollingsworth, C	6-1	306	So	Sq	Baton Rouge
11	Saleem Rasheed, LLB	6-3	227	So	1L	Birmingham	54	Kindal Moorehead, LDE	6-3	293	Jr	2L	Memphis
11	Stephen Moore, FL	6-1	170	So	Sq	Double Springs	55	Kenny King, RDE	6-4	270	So	1L	Daphne
12	John Wells, SE	6-1	185	Fr	Sq	Andalusia	55	Pat Boylan, OL	6-4	275	Sr	Sq	Bedford, N.H.
13	Kecalf Bailey, RCB	5-10	168	Sr	3L	Tuscaloosa	56	Chauvon McFadden, LDE	6-3	279	Jr	Sq	Herndon, Va.
14	Tyler Watts, QB	6-3	219	So	1L	Pelham	57	David Daniel, LDE	6-2	275	Jr	JC	Northport
15	Freddie Milons, SE	5-11	188	Jr	2L	Starkville, Miss.	58	Alonzo Ephraim, C	6-3	300	So	Sq	Birmingham
16	Cornelius Wortham, LLB	6-2	213	Fr	HS	Calhoun City, Miss.	59	Jamie Hunter, MLB	6-3	228	Jr	Sq	Daphne
17	Jonathan Richey, QB	6-1	210	Jr	Sq	Geraldine	59	David Hardin, LLB	6-2	205	Fr	Sq	Birmingham
18	Brooks Daniels, RLB	6-3	200	Fr	HS	Jasper, Fla.	61	Todd Whitmore, NT	6-6	295	Sr	Sq	Ranburne
19	Jason Jones, FS	5-11	180	Sr	2L	Tuscaloosa	62	Tripp Powell, SN	6-0	255	So	Sq	Tuscaloosa
20	Charles Jones, FS	6-1	180	Fr	RS	Waynesboro, Ga.	63	Danny Martz, LG	6-5	295	Fr	HS	Hyattsville, Md.
20	Chris Kemp, PK	5-9	189	Sr	1L	Jacksonville, Fla.	64	Randall Shoultz, LT	6-5	330	Fr	Rs	Saltpa
21	Milo Lewis, LCB	6-0	188	Sr	1L	Mtn. View, Calif.	65	Dante Ellington, LT	6-6	330	So	1L	Leighton
22	Aries Monroe, MLB	6-3	232	Jr	JC	Tallahassee	66	Shaun Williams, LT	6-5	278	Jr	Sq	Augusta, Ga.
23	Reggie Myles, S	5-11	189	Jr	2L	Pascagoula, Miss.	67	Kelvis White, NT	6-4	298	Sr	2L	Courtland
23	Clifton Carter, TB	5-10	193	So	Sq	Theodore	68	Keith Stephens, LG	6-3	333	Jr	Tr	Columbus, Ga.
24	Tony Dixon, SS-S	6-2	203	Sr	3L	Reform	69	Matt Lomax, LG	6-4	295	Fr	RS	Mobile
24	Chad Handley, SE	6-0	180	Jr	Sq	Columbiana	70	Wesley Britt, RT	6-8	302	Fr	HS	Cullman
25	Hirchel Bolden, WR	5-10	197	So	1L	Dothan	71	Marico Portis, LG	6-2	303	So	1L	Prichard
25	D. Bonga-Mukweso, SE	6-3	191	So	Sq	Tallahassee	72	Will Cuthbert, RG	6-5	329	Sr	3L	Ft. Pierce, Fla.
26	Arvin Richard, TB	5-7	185	Sr	3L	Atlanta	73	Dennis Alexander, RG	6-5	315	Fr	RS	Memphis
27	Ray Hudson, RCB	5-11	205	Fr	HS	Bonifay, Fla.	74	Paul Hogan, C	6-4	280	Sr	3L	Valdosta, Ga.
28	Shaun Bohanon, TB	6-2	215	Sr	1L	Oak Ridge, Tenn.	75	Griff Redmill, LG	6-6	301	Sr	3L	Jasper
28	Thad Walker, SS	5-10	175	So	Sq	Montevallo	76	Lannis Baxley, RT	6-6	301	So	1L	Waynesboro, Ga.
29	Ahmaad Galloway, TB	6-1	224	So	1L	Millington, Tenn.	77	Bart Raulston, RT	6-9	330	So	1L	Sylvania
29	Calvin Cook, RCB	6-0	170	So	Sq	Sylacauga	78	Justin Smiley, RG	6-4	303	Fr	HS	Brooklet, Ga.
30	Dustin McClintock, FB	6-3	249	Sr	3L	Quinlan, Texas	80	Jason McAddley, FL	6-2	194	Jr	2L	Oak Ridge, Tenn.
30	John McClelland, RCB	5-11	170	So	Sq	Wetumpka	81	Brandon Greer, SE	6-2	191	Fr	RS	Rainbow City
31	Adam Cox, RLB	6-1	223	Jr	2L	Jasper	82	Terry Jones, Jr., TE	6-3	262	Jr	2L	Tuscaloosa
32	Jeremy Taylor, SE	6-2	200	Sr	HS	Nashville, Tenn.	83	Casey Gilbert, LG	6-4	278	Fr	RS	Pascagoula, Miss.
32	Chris James, LCB	6-1	180	Fr	HS	Albany, Ga.	84	Triandos Luke, FL	6-0	175	Fr	HS	Phenix City
32	Corey Ferguson, DB	5-10	165	So	Sq	Montgomery	84	Jeremy Drummond, TE	6-4	256	Jr	Sq	Picayune, Miss.
32	Lance Taylor, WR	5-9	174	Fr	RS	Mt. Vernon	85	Tarry Givens, FL	6-5	200	Fr	HS	Tallahassee
33	Shontua Ray, LCB	5-10	204	Jr	1L	Montevallo	86	Michael James, WR	5-11	170	Jr	Tr	Tuscaloosa
33	Josh Smith, RB	5-10	195	Fr	HS	Mountain Brook	86	Hamid Haqq, WR	6-0	185	Fr	Sq	Huntsville
33	Nick Morgan, WR	5-11	185	Fr	Sq	Birmingham	87	Gerard Clark, RDE	6-7	268	Fr	HS	Daytona Beach, Fla.
34	Santonio Beard, TB	6-1	205	So	Sq	Nashville	88	Kenny Smith, DT	6-5	289	Sr	3L	Meridian, Miss.
35	Roberto McBride, FL	5-9	165	So	Sq	Lakeland, Fla.	88	Garry McNealy, TE	6-4	285	Fr	HS	Perry, Fla.
36	Connie Brown, S	6-3	210	Jr	JC	Petaluma, Calif.	89	David Cavan, TE	6-5	240	Fr	HS	Northport
36	John Mark Harrison, WR	5-11	160	Fr	RS	Gardendale	88	Reid Holley, PK	5-10	170	So	Sq	Mobile
36	Danny Kimble, RCB	5-7	180	So	Sq	Gadsden	90	N. McKay-Loescher, DE	6-4	240	Fr	HS	Toronto, Canada
37	Neal Thomas, PK	5-10	170	Jr	JC	Clinton, Miss.	91	Albert Means, RDT	6-6	330	Fr	HS	Memphis
37	Harold James, TB/LB	6-1	218	Fr	HS	Osceola, Ark.	91	David Barron, RLB	6-2	215	Sr	Sq	Marietta, Ga.
37	Joel Babb, FS	6-0	173	So	Sq	Phenix City	92	Shawn Oglesby, LDE	6-7	230	Jr	JC	Owensboro, Ky.
37	Wesley Welch, SN	6-3	178	Jr	Sq	Monroeville	92	Patrick Tate, TE	6-3	224	So	Sq	Ft. Payne
38	Shawn Draper, TE	6-4	294	Sr	3L	Huntsville	93	Bradley Ledbetter, SN	6-3	259	Sr	2L	Pelham
38	Trey Sanders, CB	5-11	195	Fr	RS	Fairfield	94	Derek Sanders, RDE	6-4	277	So	Sq	Sandersville, Ga.
39	Tyler Harris, SS	6-1	210	Fr	RS	Clinton, Tenn.	95	Sam Matthews, RDT	6-6	291	Jr	Sq	Jacksonville
40	Matthew Sanders, P	6-2	220	Fr	HS	Ashville	96	Jarret Johnson, LDT	6-4	275	So	1L	Chiefland, Fla.
40	Nathan Cox, FB	6-1	225	Fr	HS	Stapleton	97	Anthony Bryant, RDT	6-4	324	Fr	HS	Newbern
41	Marcus Spencer, SS	6-2	205	Sr	3L	York	98	Antwan Odom, LDE	6-6	260	Fr	HS	Bayou LaBatre
41	Gresham Oliver, FB	5-9	205	Fr	RS	Birmingham	98	David Voyles, TE	6-5	270	So	Sq	Ripley, Miss.
42	Brandon Miree, TB	6-2	228	Fr	RS	Cincinnati	99	Darius Gilbert, RLB	6-2	240	Jr	2L	Oxford
43	John Gartman, SE	6-4	175	Jr	Sq	Camden							



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Can He Be Best-Ever Linebacker?

by Kirk McNair

Despite his excellent play as freshman, improvement is expected this year

What do you do for an encore? Saleem Rasheed had a magnificent first football season at Alabama. Last year as a freshman he was named the Freshman Defensive Player of the Year in the Southeastern Conference. When he started at left linebacker in the opening game of the 1999 season, Rasheed became the first true freshman in modern times to start on defense for the Crimson Tide.

He continued to start every game at linebacker and led Alabama in tackles. The numbers are more than impressive. He finished the regular season with 84 tackles, 19 more than runner-up Tony Dixon. He had three sacks and another eight tackles behind the line on running plays. He caused a fumble and recovered a fumble, broke up a pass, had six quarterback pressures, and blocked a punt (against Mississippi State).

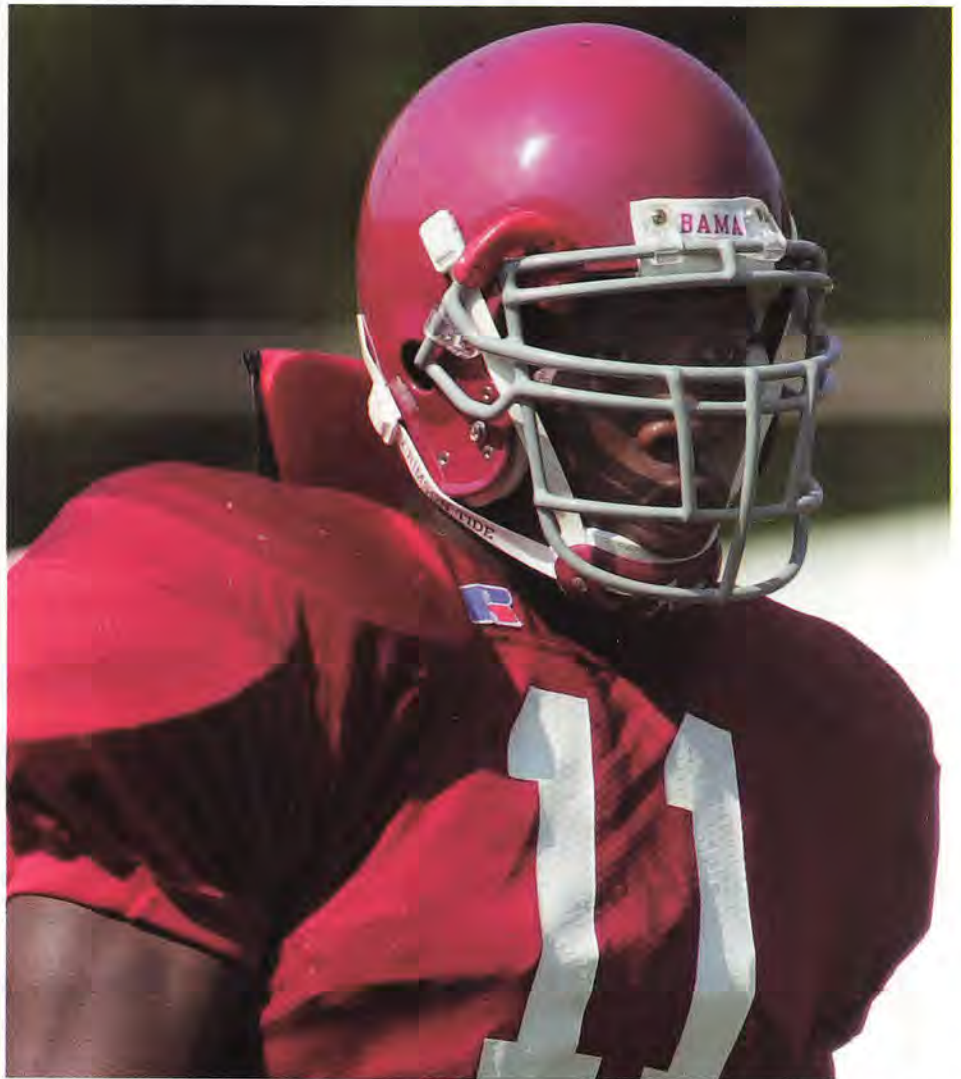
And Saleem didn't show any signs of letting up during spring practice. Bama coaches named him winner of the Lee Roy Jordan Headhunter Award, named for the man considered the greatest linebacker in Crimson Tide history.

Defensive Coordinator Ellis Johnson, who also coaches outside linebackers, said, "I don't know if he's going to be the best one we've ever had at Alabama, because a lot of great ones have gone through here. But he's the most unusual freshman we've ever had. He's talented, of course, but the thing that is so impressive about him is his maturity and his work ethic and his intelligence. He's focused, disciplined, and he's not intimidated by the situation, and he has been that way from the day he got here. I've never been around a freshman who picked things up so quickly. And if he made a mistake, it bothered him, but it didn't get him down. Some are smart and some are tough and he's both."

Tide Head Coach Mike DuBose said, "Saleem is a remarkable young man. He's a playmaker. I knew when we signed him that he had great talent, but he was more instinctive than I thought he would be as a freshman."

It's no wonder that Johnson said, "I don't know what he'll be like by the time he's a senior. I don't know what his limits are."

Johnson certainly doesn't expect a "sophomore slump" from Rasheed. "There's too



Saleem Rasheed is a pre-season All-America going into just his second season at Alabama. He was the first freshman in Bama history to lead the Crimson Tide in tackles. Barry Fikes Photo

much to him," the coach said. And despite his excellent freshman play, Johnson looks for Rasheed to have the improvement that comes with experience. "You can just see that he's going to get better and better," the coach said. "He can improve his coverage skills a little. He'll see things a little quicker as he gains experience. He'll become more consistent. A lack of confidence has never been a problem for him, but he'll become even more confident. And even though he's just going to be a sophomore, he's already showing that he's going to be a heck of a leader for us. You can tell when he steps into the huddle that even the oldest guys respect him."

Rasheed, 6-3, 227, is up about 10 pounds from his playing weight last year. He said, "I've got a little experi-

ence now, and I feel like I'll have good carry-over going into this year. But I've still got a lot to learn. I'm still a relatively young player. I know that I'll face new challenges and have new experiences every time out."

Rasheed came to Alabama from Shades Valley High School, on the outskirts of Birmingham, and Johnson said, "He was coached well in high school." Former Tide player Robert Higginbotham was Rasheed's head coach at Shades Valley. Ironically, about the time Rasheed moved to Tuscaloosa, so did Higginbotham, as head coach at Tuscaloosa County High School.

Saleem said, "He was tough and demanded a lot out of me, but that worked out well, because I demand a lot of myself."

Rasheed said that the biggest change for him was "the speed and strength in college ball. Usually in high school we would play a

team that had either strong guys or fast guys, but not both. In college, they are both. And in high school, I was better than most of the guys I went against, but here everyone is as good as I am."

Rasheed is being generous when he says every college player is as good as he is. Johnson knew very early last year that the young linebacker had some special talents. In the first scrimmage of the pre-season, Johnson said, "He was as good as anyone we had on the field."

Still, Rasheed didn't expect to earn a starting job. "I thought I'd get some playing time," he said. "Starting that first game was a dream come true. Then I tried to get better every week. We experienced some bad things last year, but I think the adversity made us stronger as a team."

He said that "Leading the team in tackles meant a lot to me. I didn't know about it until a few months after the season, and I think that would have been a pretty far-fetched goal for me to have had going into my first year. I was told I was the first freshman to lead the team in tackles, and I consider that an honor since there have been so many great players here. And we have a lot of great players on our defense now."

While Rasheed considers the loss to Louisiana Tech the lowest point of last season, he said, "Every week we were pressed to the limit. It seemed that even if we led the whole game, it took some last-minute heroics to pull out the wins. That's what playing in the SEC is all about. It's funny that the only easy SEC game we had was the championship game."

One of those games involving "last-minute heroics" was the LSU contest. On the final play of that 23-17 win, a tackle at the goalline to preserve victory, Bama middle linebacker Marvin Constant suffered a season-ending knee injury. As a

result, Rasheed was shifted from outside linebacker to middle linebacker for the final few games of the year.

Saleem didn't look at that as a hardship. "I consider myself a natural linebacker, and it's just playing football, which I think I'm pretty good at. It was a little more physical inside was all."

Rasheed doesn't expect to have to make that move to the inside this year. "Marvin's recovery is coming pretty well. Victor (Ellis) is really coming along. And Aries (Monroe) is a specimen—big, strong and fast. We'll be okay at middle (linebacker)."

Once upon a time, Alabama played with a strongside linebacker and a weakside linebacker, those players having to flip-flop sides from time-to-time to get into position. Now Rasheed is the left linebacker and Darius Gilbert the right linebacker, meaning on one play Rasheed may be a traditional strongside linebacker (usually the side with the tight end and more likely to have a running play coming at him) and on another play the weakside linebacker.

"I think that's a good way to do it," Rasheed said. "It means I'm both a strong and a weak linebacker, depending on how they (the opposing offense) line up. I think it makes you concentrate better on the assignment and makes you a better player."

Traditionally, middle linebacker has had responsibility for calling switches in the defense. When Rasheed made that move last year it wasn't a new responsibility for him. Even though just a freshman, he had play-calling responsibility from his outside post, which he retained when he moved inside.

Johnson said that Rasheed's best position is outside linebacker, but knows after last year that Rasheed could move to middle linebacker if needed. "He'll make plays anywhere," Johnson said. "Put him at safety and he'd make plays."

DuBose said, "There are things we can do

to utilize Saleem's ability, particularly his speed. From the outside linebacker position he can be used both as a cover man and on the blitz. He has a chance to be outstanding."

Saleem followed much the same routine this summer as he did prior to joining Bama last year. He took some summer school classes and did a lot of conditioning work. He also made a trip to Auburn to see his former prep teammate, Mayo Sowell, who will be a freshman linebacker for the Tigers and help Sowell make the transition to college.

College life hasn't proved particularly difficult for Rasheed. At the end of this summer he was over a third of the way through with his graduation requirements. The marketing major had done pretty well, too, compiling a 3.73 grade point average. What that means is that he's made a couple of B grades, the rest A.

Although he hopes to earn his degree in three years, he's not necessarily thinking about leaving Alabama at that time. He said he wouldn't even think about professional football "except that someone asks me about it nearly every day."

As most players of his ability, Rasheed would like to play professional football one day. His brother, Dawud, a former star at Duke, is on injured reserve with the New York Giants. "But," he said, "right now I'm going to enjoy college football. The only thing on my mind is winning a national championship."

He doesn't consider that a far-fetched proposition. "That's the goal at Alabama every year, but it's a realistic goal this year," Rasheed said. "We've got all the elements in talent and depth."

And, pressed, he admits that he has a personal goal, too. "I set my goals high, and I think All-America is realistic," he said. "But that's really secondary to the team goal."



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"THE ULTIMATE GOAL"

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Tide Snapper Has Made Sacrifices

by Jess Nicholas

He plays important role
on Bama's special teams

Bradley Ledbetter spends a lot of time thinking about the "snap," but, fortunately, a snap that occurred in the summer does not appear to be a factor in Alabama's football preparation this fall.

Ledbetter is the snapper for Alabama's kickers—punters and field goal and extra point men. His job is one of the critical elements of that important special teams play. And as a

handler of the football in crucial situations, it is important that Ledbetter keep his hands in good working order.

That's why a snap early this summer was potentially hazardous to Alabama football plans. The snap was to Ledbetter's right hand, his snapping hand. "I was working with another guy tearing a deck down and it just crashed down on my hand," said the centerpiece of the Tide's kicking units. The weight of the deck broke Ledbetter's right hand, requiring surgery. That took the fate of the Tide's special teams out of Bradley's hands and put them in the hands of doctors. Early reports indicate the physicians did their job well.

"I'm still rehabbing it, but I'm snapping the ball well," Ledbetter said. "I've got my snap times back down to where they were in the spring."

Ledbetter will talk candidly about his accident, but his mind clearly is on the future, not the past. And he's taken special steps regarding the immediate football future. On August 12, Bradley walked down the aisle of Coleman Coliseum to accept his bachelor's degree in business management. Even though he has been graduated from The University, Ledbetter has declared a second major in communications and public relations so that he will be able to complete his fifth year of eligibility for the Crimson Tide this fall.

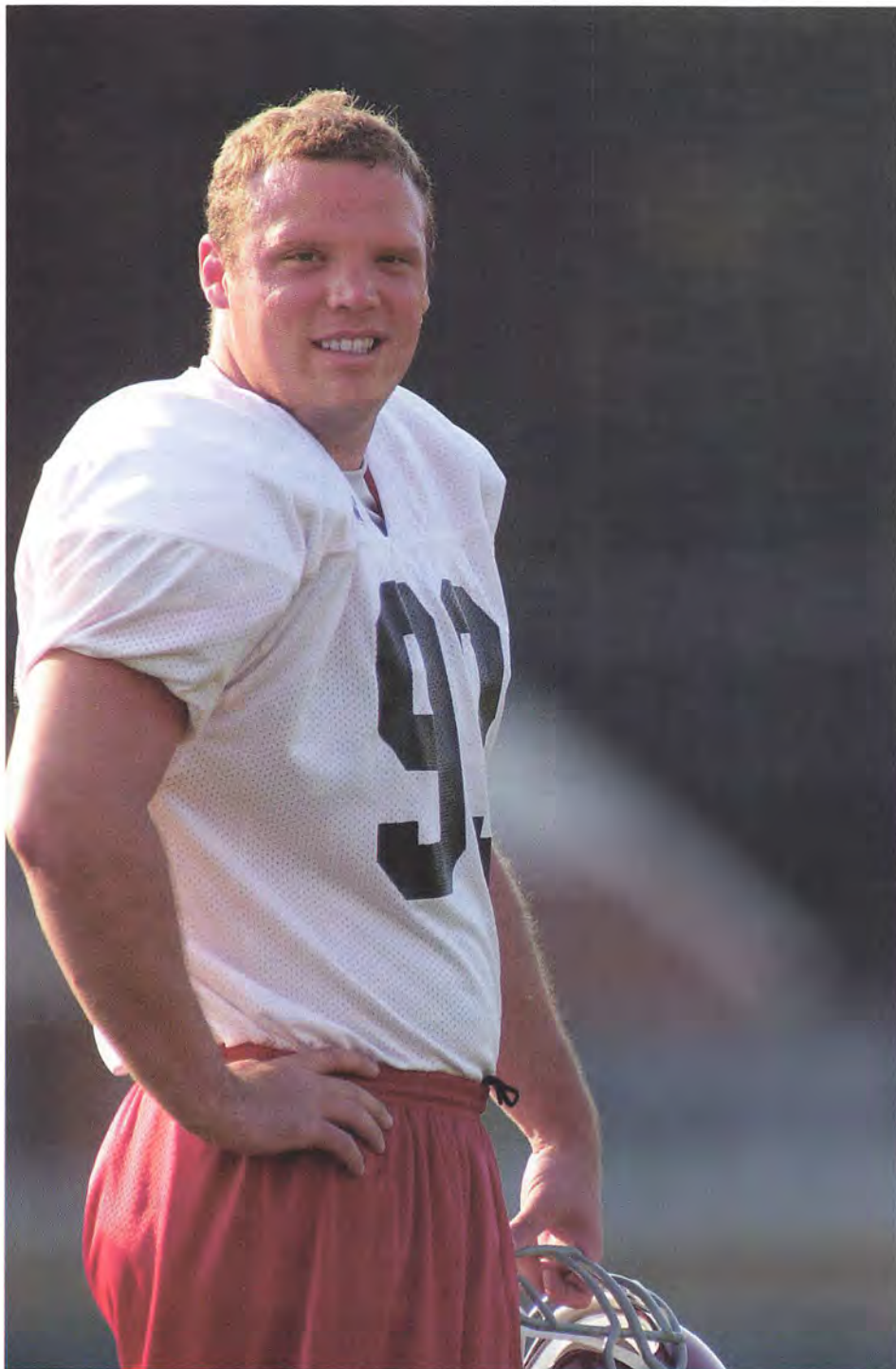
Bradley says the prospect of competing for a national title was strong motivation for him to continue his college education. "It's definitely very exciting," he said. "Being part of a national championship team, going back to Miami—the game, the ring. I'm looking forward to it."

To get to Alabama, Ledbetter followed a path familiar to two of his teammates. Ledbetter played his prep ball at Pelham High School, alma mater of quarterback Tyler Watts and Lane Bearden, to whom Bradley found himself snapping a ball to for much of the spring. Bearden, Jason Kellen, and Reid Holley competed for the punter's job this spring, and every punt started with a ball snapped from Ledbetter's hands. This fall he has been snapping to freshman Matt Sanders as well. Those punters are also prime candidates to be the recipients of shorter snaps as they are in contention for the job of holder for place-kicks on extra points and field goals.

"I was a center in high school," Ledbetter said. "Lane was a freshman when I was a senior, and I snapped to Tyler for two years." In addition to long snapping duties, Ledbetter was Pelham's regular center.

Bradley Ledbetter is returning for a fifth year at Alabama in order to handle snapping duties. The prospect of a national championship motivated him to play another season.

Barry Fikes Photo



Upon arriving at Alabama in 1996, Ledbetter's days of playing center were over. Few would consider Ledbetter small at 6-3, 260. But in the world of football at the level at which Bama plays, that's not big enough to be on the offensive line. Nevertheless, there is a place for the "little man" in football.

Bradley's skills as a snapper would prove to be the ticket that led to him seeing action as a member of the Crimson Tide. Coaches immediately assigned the walk-on to the snapper position. However, he didn't see immediate game action. In fact, he did not play in a game in 1996 or 1997. His first opportunity came when he was a redshirt sophomore, in 1998. That year he became the Tide's "long snapper," meaning the snapper in punting situations. And since Alabama punted in every game, he played in every game.

His role was expanded last year. He added the duties of snapper on place-kicks. As a result, he has now played in 25 consecutive Alabama games.

In recent years the NCAA football rules-makers took steps to make the job of snapper a little less dangerous with a set of rules unique to the position. Rules govern many aspects of the snapper's position, most for reasons of safety.

"After I snap it, there is a one-count before anyone can hit me," Ledbetter said. The rule

is designed to protect snappers from neck injuries, particularly on punts. On a punt snap, the snapper is bent over at the waist and must accurately send the ball as far as 51 feet backwards. The procedure is the same for place-kicks, as are the protection rules, although the distance of the snap drops to around 20-25 feet. The distance in both cases is dependent on the preferences of the kicker.

Bradley says snapping has become a reflex action for him. "I just go out there and do it; I don't think much about the snap," he said. "When I think about it, that's when something goes wrong. I just think about who I have to block and tackle." He has been quite accurate in his work over the past two seasons.

While the rules prohibit a rusher from hitting the snapper early, Ledbetter is expected to hit a rusher. Unlike most teams, where the snappers are not called upon to block anyone, Alabama's playbook calls for Ledbetter to defend the punters and kickers, and then to head downfield following a punt snap. "That's the hardest part," he said. "The up-back calls either 'left' or 'right,' and I block the player to the side that he calls. Most high school and college snappers don't have blocking responsibilities, but here, I do."

He also has an area of responsibility in punt coverage, though he's hardly expected to be a

primary tackler since he has to take care of the snap and punt protection first. But in the past two years he has made five tackles in the punting game.

Coach Jeff Rouzie, whose primary job for Alabama is coaching linebackers, is responsible for punting team assignments. Coach Ronnie Cottrell, Alabama's recruiting coordinator and tight ends coach, works with the individual members of the special teams units, including all kickers.

In 1999, Ledbetter realized another dream when he was awarded a scholarship by Head Coach Mike DuBose. Like many other walk-ons, Bradley is grateful to have joined the ranks of scholarship players. "It felt great that my parents could quit having to pay for school," he said.

Bradley said that playing for Alabama was just a case of doing what came naturally. "I grew up an Alabama fan," Ledbetter said. "My dad is a graduate of Alabama, and we came to all the Alabama games. It's a dream come true."

Ledbetter has certainly made sacrifices for the Crimson Tide, from coming without a scholarship then serving two years of duty without playing, to now extending his college career and rehabilitating his hand in order to be able to snap. Hopefully, those sacrifices will be part of the ingredients of Bama football success in 2000.

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The Pancake Posse:

Offensive Linemen Tell Tales

by J. E. Lisby

Bama's up-front veterans have earned their stripes

The Big Uglies. Far from a term of derision, that's one of the better-known and more descriptive names for those unheralded, but essential, member of a football team—the offensive linemen. This year's Alabama offensive line includes three seniors who are true veterans, three-year starting center Paul Hogan of Valdosta, Georgia; two-year starting left guard Griff Redmill of Jasper; and two-year starter Will Cuthbert of Fort Pierce, Florida, who has been both a tackle and a guard on the right side.

That group has now appropriated its own nickname: the "Pancake Posse." A pancake is a lineman's ultimate success, a block that puts the defender on his back, "flat as..."

"Everyone told us to think up a nickname," Hogan said. "Griff and I were sitting in the weight room one day and we just thought it up. When reporters interview linemen, they usually don't have much to ask us, so we came up with 'Pancake Posse' to help them out." He added that they hope "Bryant-Denny (Stadium) becomes known as IHOP—International House of Pancakes."

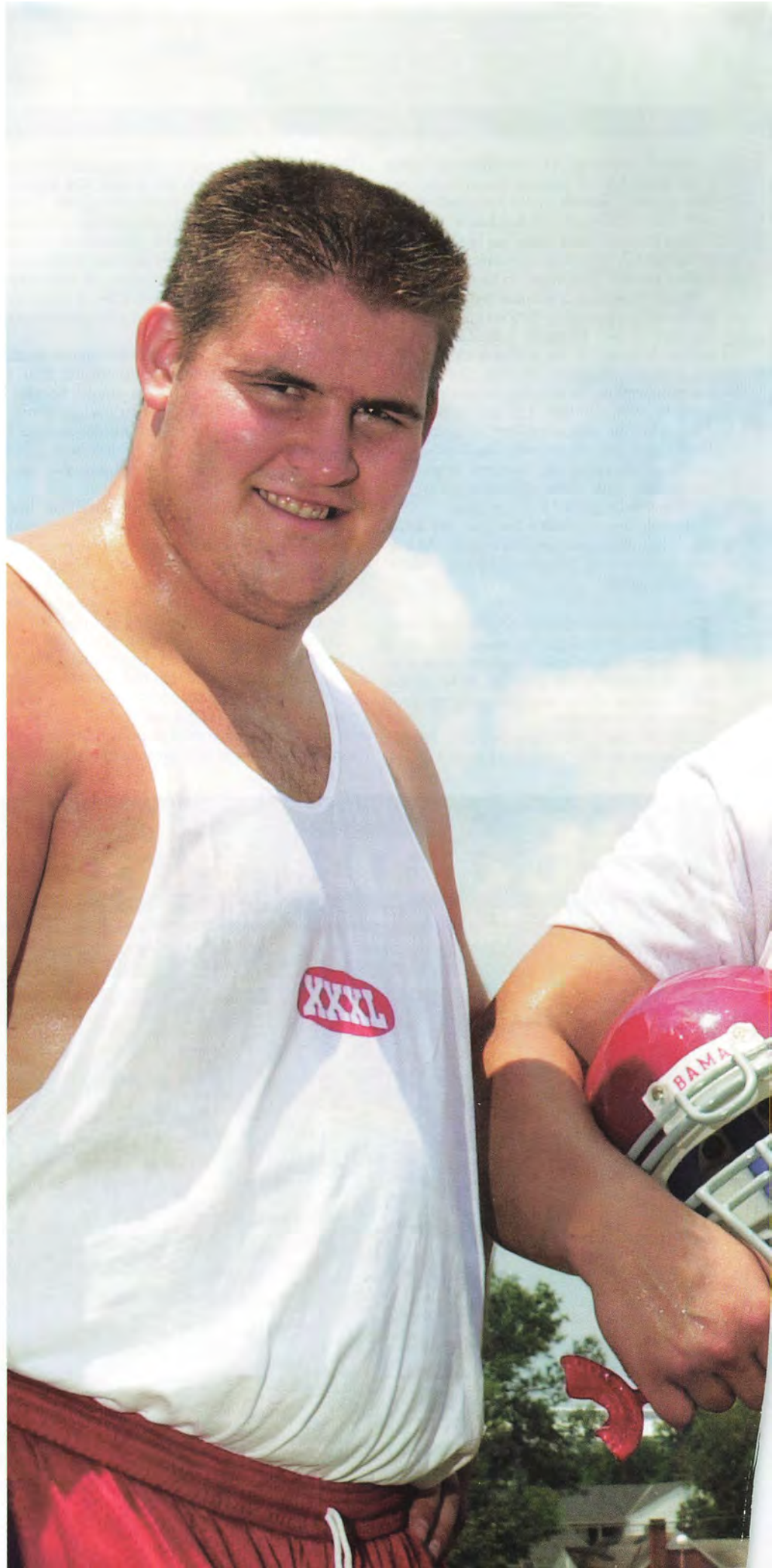
"You remember nicknames, like 'Fridge,' the 'Steel Curtain,' the 'Hogs,' and so on," Cuthbert said.

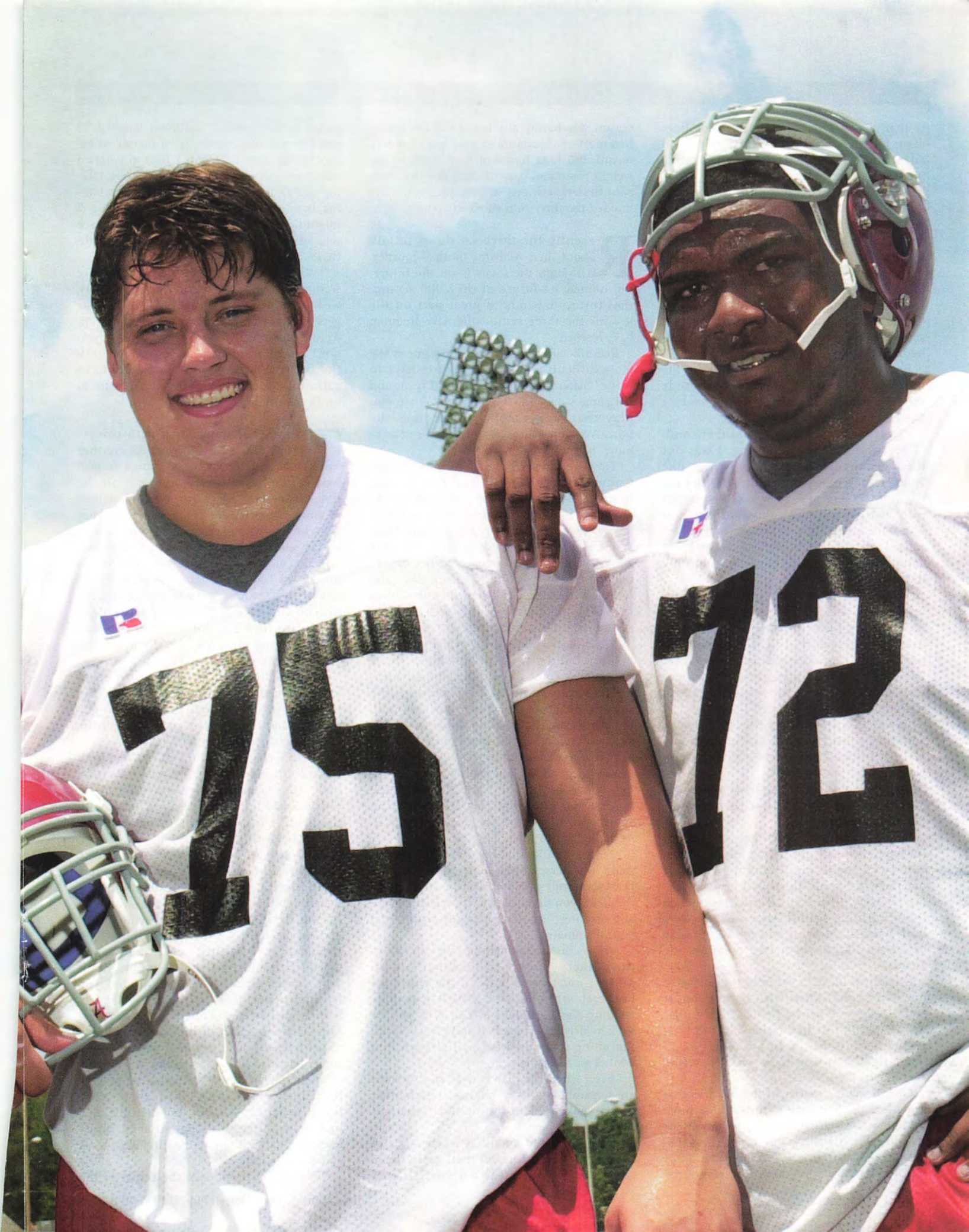
"Shoot! There's a guy that made All-SEC nicknamed 'Pork Chop,' (Mississippi State's Womack," Redmill said with a laugh. "I think Will and I are as good as he is. From now on, you can call me 'Hambone.' 'Hambone' Redmill."

The three friends and teammates have been content to labor in the relative obscuri-

The three senior members of the offensive line are expected to lead the way for Alabama's offense this year. They are (left to right) center Paul Hogan, left guard Griff Redmill and right guard Will Cuthbert.

Barry Fikes Photo





ty that comes with being an offensive lineman, but they are pleased their combined talent and experience have generated media interest about the offensive line.

"We never expected any attention," Redmill said. "So when we didn't get it, we weren't upset. Now with some reporters coming around, this is like a bonus for us. We're actually getting some respect now."

The honors bestowed on the three by various pre-season publications bear that out. Last year Hogan made All-Southeastern Conference as a junior. This year he's a pre-season pick to repeat with Cuthbert and Redmill joining him on various lists.

But it hasn't always been that way for the trio. Not even close. "I didn't block anybody the first week I was here," Hogan said. "I was just out there running around."

"Everybody was good," Cuthbert said. "They were all big and strong. I was out there against Chris Hood, and I was like 'Man! I can't block this dude.' And let me tell you, six a.m. was hell. Waking up that early and going through those drills. It was like boot camp. It was rough for me, because I wasn't ready. In high school we had a conditioning program, but it was nothing like that!"

"I don't think anybody can be ready for it," Redmill added. "That first practice was like nothing I ever dreamed of. You went from playing against 15-16-17-year-olds in high school, to playing against guys that are 22. And everybody's bigger and stronger than you. Every day I was wondering how I was going to make it through."

"It was a constant struggle for me," Hogan admitted. "Just trying to get stronger and make it to that level where everybody else was."

At what point was the level achieved? "Well, it sure wasn't that first game," Redmill laughed.

"It sure wasn't!" Cuthbert agreed. "I've got the tape of that game at my house. When you watch the replay, it's funny. We're just out there watching them fly by, not blocking anybody. Griff and I started together in the third game against Arkansas. We were both back-up tackles, and on Wednesday before we played they moved us to starting guards."

"I had just moved over from the defensive line and I barely knew what I was doing at tackle," Redmill said. "Coach (Neil Callaway) said 'It's just like tackle.' And I'm listening because he's been coaching for 25 years, right? But you know what? It wasn't 'just like tackle.'"

One of the big stories of the day was that it marked the first time in history that three freshmen had started together in the offensive line for Alabama. But when the game ended in a frustrating 17-16 loss, that bit of history was mostly forgotten. The rest of the

season was hardly any better for the young linemen as Alabama stumbled to a 4-7 record. But long hours of hard work in the weight room and conditioning coupled with countless repetitions in practice eventually molded the three into an effective unit.

Recently the three sat down to talk about their Alabama football journey. Although the focus is on the future, the immediate future of the 2000 season, that future depends in great part on the lessons the three senior offensive linemen have learned.

Redmill said the speed of the game is the most difficult adjustment players have to make. "After awhile you get used to it, and the game slows down," he said. "When you play that many snaps, it becomes the norm. We don't think about the speed anymore, because we're used to it."

"Now we can pretty much look at the (defensive) linemen and tell what they're going to do," Hogan said. "Last year there wasn't anything all year long that we hadn't seen before. We had seen every stunt, everything. When you're at the line you're just thinking about what you're supposed to do. You've only got about a second to get up there and recognize the defense. Then when the ball is snapped, you're just reacting. We've done it a hundred times in practice."

"Your body takes over," Cuthbert said. "With the three of us, we just know where each other's going to be. What's important is for everybody to be on the same page. We can actually make the wrong (blocking) call, but if everybody listens and does what he's supposed to do, it'll still work out."

At that line of scrimmage is where the real action takes place. Football is called a contact sport, but in the trenches where the biggest and strongest play, it's a collision sport. And it seems to be accomplished in deafening confusion.

"Maybe it's like that for others," Cuthbert said. "But personally I don't even hear the fans sometimes. When we're out there on the field, you don't notice. It's just the game and reacting. You don't hear the crowd, just your teammates."

"What's funny is sometimes we can talk to each other while we're blocking," Hogan said. "I don't know how in the world we hear each other, but we do. We'll be double-teaming a guy and I'll say, 'Go, Will, go!' Or we'll be driving off the ball and I'll say, 'Griff, I'm going around.' And he'll stay on him while I go on to the next guy."

"Even when the play is over and the fans are screaming, we'll be talking to each other as we walk back to the huddle," Redmill said.

But back in the huddle is where some of the movies depicting football really have gotten it right, at least to a degree. "It does

go on in the huddle," Cuthbert laughed. "I can tell you that much. It's a matter of seniority, of course. When I first got here I didn't say a word. The older guys were talking and joking, but not Will. But there's talking in there about just about everything. I might be saying, 'I just got beat. Did you see what he did on that play? How'd he do that?'"

"When we've got time, like when we're waiting on the receiver to bring in the play, we'll talk," Hogan said. "But when the play gets to the huddle, everybody's hushed up. Actually, when things are going well, you don't want to say anything funny to break the rhythm. You might say something to calm folks down, but you don't want to break the rhythm."

Talking back and forth with players from the opposing team is another matter. Often there is mutual respect between fellow athletes, but not all the time. Tennessee's Al Wilson probably talked as much as any player in the conference, but team honors belong elsewhere. "Oh, Auburn by far talked the most," Hogan said. "They talk the most garbage. Even in the fourth quarter of last year's game, they were still talking. I saw Chris Samuels take an Auburn player and face plant him in the dirt. Afterward, the guy got up with dirt and grass hanging onto his face mask, and he was still talking trash."

All three linemen have tales to tell about less than civil play during the games. "My freshman year at an away game I had a guy kick me and then step on me," Hogan said. "And I've had a guy spit in my face."

"I had a player come up and hit me from behind 10 seconds after the play," Redmill said. "He came up full speed and hit me in the back and I did a belly flop right there on the field." He said that particular team "is bad about that."

"I'm not going to name any names," Cuthbert added. "But in one conference game I had a guy I was blocking pull back his arm and take a long-uppercut swing and hit me right in the groin. He swung hard and hit me solid. I didn't do anything right then, but I really wanted to. But you can't retaliate. That'll just get you in trouble. But if a guy takes a cheap shot at you and you have an opportunity to get him back, say with a cut block, you're going to try to get him. That's just part of the game. It's going to get physical out there, and when you get somebody mad, things are going to happen."

Tough, physical play is the nature of football, and it falls to the officials to keep things under control. But too often the men in striped shirts miss flagrant calls, while flagging phantom violations. Just what does constitute holding?

"Basically, if it's outside the center of the

chest then it's holding," Cuthbert said. "You're allowed to put your hands inside the shoulders and grab. The officials will usually give you one warning if you're outside. But you could call holding against someone on just about every play, if you wanted to."

"Sometimes you can have a perfectly good block, and they'll flag it," Hogan stated. "There was a play in the Florida game where we ran a shovel pass and I was blocking a guy and Will comes up and knocks him down. What was I supposed to do? Keep him from falling? I didn't hold; Will just hit him so hard that he went down. But the guy threw the flag and we almost lost."

Holding may be hard for the fans to spot. But when an offensive lineman goes off sides, there's usually no secret regarding the miscreant.

"When that happens, your first instinct is 'Didn't you say it was on one?'" Redmill said with a laugh. "The other ten guys are wrong and you're right. It's usually just a lack of concentration in the huddle rather than not listening at the line. You're thinking about what you've got to do on the play and not listening to the snap count. You think you heard it, but you didn't."

"As long as a quarterback stays in a rhythm with his cadence, it won't bother you," Hogan said. "But if he changes, there

can be problems. If he says 'Go on first sound,' and then he gets up there and looks around and somebody on the defense says something, you can wind up just reacting."

What about those occasions when a player gets to the line and realizes he doesn't know the snap count? "If you don't know, just ask the center or quarterback," Cuthbert replied. "It happens. Even if the defender's right there, you've got to ask and let the defense know. That's just part of football."

Another part of football common to all athletes who play the game—especially those who fight it out along the line of scrimmage—is pain. "The worst part is when you get out of bed Sunday morning," Redmill said. "You just kind of shuffle around like an old man. Ankles, knees and hips. All of the above ache."

"The SEC championship game on that (artificial) turf?" Hogan said. "That chewed up my forearms."

"I've still got a scar on my forearm from that game," Cuthbert said. "I fell down on the ground and the turf cut me like a razor."

"And you don't realize that the turf burns are going to hurt that much until you get into the shower," Redmill added. "But then you feel it. It just takes a thin layer of skin off you all over your arms and legs."

But "Pain don't hurt," as the line goes.

And it's commonplace for athletes to endure the minor agonies of the game in their determination to succeed. For Hogan, Cuthbert and Redmill (and their offensive line teammates), the endurance run begins in practice in the heat of August under the eye of Line Coach Neil Callaway.

"Every year for the first couple of days he just tries to drill us," Cuthbert said. "Everybody else will be inside showering, and we'll still be out there running. Your body's tired and you're mentally tired, but you say, 'I'm going to do this.' You know he's making you better."

"Coach Callaway's just not going to let anybody work harder than us," Redmill said. "Nobody's going to outwork him. He knows that when he pushes us like that in practice, we won't ever reach that point on the football field. You get to the point where you probably wish somebody would just shoot you. But every year it builds, and you learn your body can do a lot more than you think it can."

"I think that's one reason why we're good," Hogan said. "I'm not trying to brag, but we've been through the hardest things you can go through. When things get tough, we know compared to that, this is easy."

And if the "Pancake Posse" does the job expected of it, this should be a successful Alabama football season.

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BAMA

Goal Is To Get Back To The Top

by J.E. Lisby

Injuries were costly in '99, but Tide has depth as well as talent for this campaign

Since accepting the challenge of coming to Alabama and starting a women's soccer program, Tide Head Coach Don Staley has experienced great success, achieving regional and national rankings as well as bringing home three Southeastern Conference Western Division titles. That's one reason why last season's 6-14 record (3-6 in conference) was such a shock.

Predicted by many to win another divisional title and contend for conference and national honors, the '99 team was devastated by injuries. At one point, Staley had only four players medically cleared to practice. But despite the adversity, the squad soldiered on, giving Staley reason for optimism. "(In one game) we only had 11 players out there, so they all had to play the entire 90 minutes and not one of them quit," Staley said. "I thought it was an indication of which way the program is heading. After last season we could have just rolled over, but these players want to go out and prove that last year was a fluke."

To say that the 1999 squad was unlucky, would hardly do the term justice, but Staley has taken a lesson from the experience. "Previously, I had always been a believer that smaller is better," Staley said. "In '98 a smaller roster worked, because we didn't have the injuries, but in '99 it didn't. In looking back at last season, we've pinpointed our major problem and that was lack of depth."

Recognizing the problem also provided the solution. When a program lacks depth, a coach solves that dilemma by recruiting more players, which is precisely what Staley and his staff did. Hitting the recruiting trail hard, the Tide coaches have signed the largest freshman class in the history of Alabama soccer.

A total of 14 top athletes committed to join the Tide program for the 2000 season. From top to bottom, it's a very talented class, but Staley is more impressed with other qualities. "The added depth is important," he said, "but more than anything we added quality players with great character who are also solid in the classroom. I go down their resumes and I see kids with academic all-state honors, 4.0 GPAs, high ACT scores, and I know that we've got good kids."



Senior Melissa McGee, a forward for the Crimson Tide, has had a good career for the Crimson Tide with over 50 goals. She is one of the leaders of what should be another strong Alabama soccer team.

University of Alabama Photo by Kent Gidley

Recruited from all parts of the South (and beyond), the incoming players are a diverse group, with a little bit of everything for a squad badly in need of an influx of talent.

Under Staley, Alabama has been known as "Goalkeeper U" for the outstanding play in net. And last season was no exception, with Rachel Brown

being named to the All-SEC squad. But Brown's off-season transfer to Pittsburgh has thrown the position wide open, and incoming freshman Lauren Bowen is expected to compete with returning seniors Latonda Eubanks and Tasha Denecke for the job.

On defense, along with sophomore Kim Zarzour, team captain Dawn Battle returns from an anterior cruciate ligament injury suffered in the Tennessee game. "After much consideration, it was evident that Dawn was the right choice (for captain)," Staley related. "Dawn has so many assets that any coach would want her to lead the team. She brings stability to the team. Her teammates feel confident that she'll always be there to stop anything that might get past them. And she brings speed to the table and a 'no fear' attitude."

"It was hard for her to watch from the sidelines last season due to the injury, but she grew so much during that time, that I believe she will do a great job in leading us to a successful campaign."

Newcomers slated to help along the defensive line are Caroline Bolz, Kristin McRee, Jennifer Durkee, and Melissa Montgomery. At 5-10, Montgomery has a height advantage in going for headers and is expected to bolster the traditionally tough Tide defense. Both Bolz and McRee earned all-state honors while also participating with Olympic development squads.

Six veteran athletes return for the Tide at the important midfield positions, including Tiffany Carle, Michele Evans, Missy Keller, Ellen Sanders, Kathleen Motheral and Amanda Lewis. Sophomore Evans has started 11 games in her career and can score as well as play tough defense. And Sanders brings the valuable ability to "throw in" up to 50 yards. During the 99 season, she tallied three assists, and two came off throw-ins.

Three new athletes are designated to help with the outside-midfield positions. Rebecca Baker, Ann Gilbert, and Kelly Rowe bring speed and scoring ability to the striker position. "Between Rebecca, Ann, and Kelly, I strongly believe we have obtained the necessary wheels that we sorely missed last season," Staley said.

To help out at the center-midfield slot, the Tide staff brought in two athletes already accustomed to working together as a unit. Katie Holtzapfel and Lauren Imwalle arrive at The Capstone from the talent-rich area of Northern Kentucky/Southern Ohio, where both played together on the successful Cincinnati Cardinals club team. Earning the nickname "the General" from her coach, Imwalle is a leader both on and off the playing field. And all Holtzapfel did was end her prep career second on the all-time list for assists in the state of Kentucky. Both girls have played together for so long that they claim to "feed off each other" during games. [Interestingly, Katie's father, Michael, started

on Notre Dame's 1966 national championship football team that played for a tie with Michigan State, thereby denying an undefeated Tide squad a national title.]

Two veteran Tiders return at the important forward position. Junior striker Danielle Watson led the team last season with six goals, and senior Melissa McGee is a proven play-maker with 50 career goals at Alabama.

Some of the top prep scorers in the country round out the Tide squad, as newcomers Elizabeth Jannik, Dawn Nash, Jessica McLean, and Sarah Marcantel all bring impressive credentials.

Starring in softball, basketball and soccer, in high school, McLean is an all-around athlete who impressed the Tide coaches at camp. Marcantel is also a versatile player, running track and cross-country as a teenager. At 5-8, Nash is a physical presence on the soccer field. Coach Staley describes her playing style as "a bull in a china shop," referring to Nash's willingness to run over and through defenders to get to the ball. Jannik dominated girls junior soccer in Mississippi, leading the state (boys and girls) in scoring as a junior and coming in second the other years.

Staley is anxious to see how the incoming talent blends with the returning veterans. "Of the freshmen there are at least seven who could go out and start right now," he said. "We can't wait to get this class into the mix to compete for starting positions."

Though clearly pleased with the newcomers' talent, Staley recalls another championship Tide coach when he notes what he likes best about the group. "I always want to recruit good, tough, committed players who want to be with me and this team," Staley explained. "We have one player coming in, who every time she came to see us play, we lost. But she still wanted to come, because

she loved Alabama and wanted to be a part of the Crimson Tide soccer program. Coach Bryant always said that he wasn't the best with the blue-chip players. Instead he won championships with the other players, the blue-collar players."

One obvious problem associated with bringing in so many new athletes is establishing team chemistry. No matter how high the talent level, a squad that isn't able to work together effectively won't win many games. And that's especially true in soccer, where even the best player in the world can accomplish little without the help of teammates.

It's a truth not lost on Staley as he thinks about the upcoming season. "We have some good technical players on this team, and we'll take some time to determine what style of play we'll use this year," Staley said. "But the girls have made good commitments in their base training in order to become stronger. Our goal in 2000 is to balance the size of the roster and the abilities of the players. We should not depend on one player. It takes 11 to win, and it's imperative the team operates with that in mind."

Staley is not used to losing and he's hopeful that the incoming players will mesh quickly with the returning talent and prove last season's record an aberration. "With this year's recruiting class, we have accomplished all three of our goals—obtaining depth, speed and integrity," Staley said. "We're anxious to get the freshmen into camp, and pick up where we left off last year."

"The opening game (August 25 vs. Louisiana-Monroe) will be the biggest game of the year for us, because we will go into it with no experience in terms of live game play. We'll have to recapture the confidence that brought three SEC Western Division titles to this school. And in doing so we'll hopefully continue the tradition that is Alabama soccer."



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This Tide Has Senior Leadership

by Kirk McNair

Entire team returns from much-improved '99 squad

Senior leadership is considered essential to college athletics success by coaches. So consider Judy Green's situation in her fourth season as Alabama volleyball coach last year. She had no seniors. Even with that, the Tide continued the improvement it has enjoyed under Green each year, posting a 17-15 mark. But the really good news is that all six starters, indeed, all 14 players, return from that team.

"I've waited a long time to have more than one senior in a class," Green said. This year Alabama has six seniors, and is considered a contender in the Southeastern Conference Western Division. Three of those seniors are the backbone of the squad. Allison Lange, a 5-8 setter, is a four-year starter and runs the offense. She is joined by 5-11 outside hitter Michelle Green, a first team All-SEC performer a year ago, and 6-0 Monica Morales, a fifth-year senior who earned her degree (and a final year of eligibility after being a partial qualifier in 1996) this summer. Morales, a left-hander, is an opposite (right) side hitter.

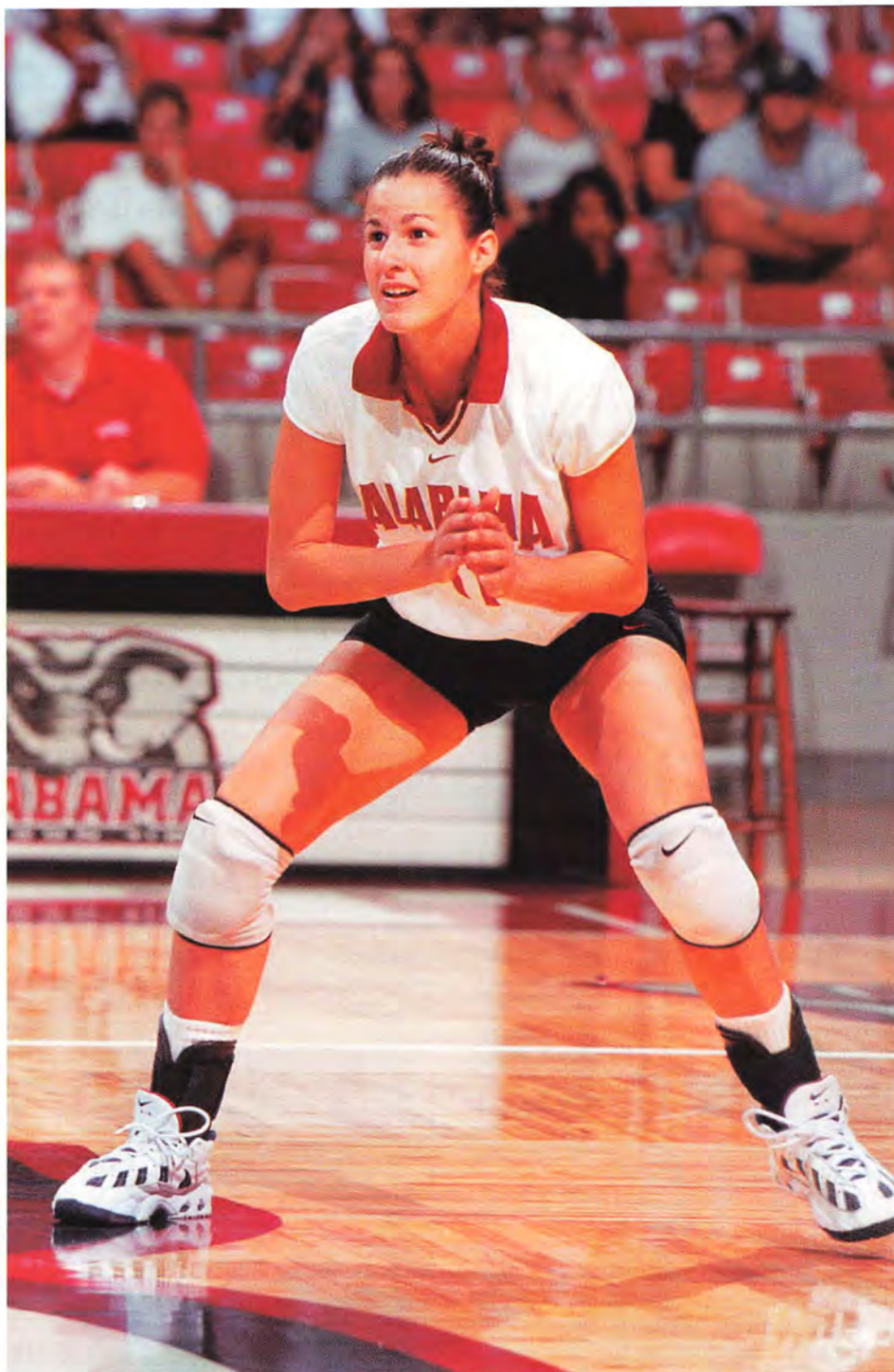
Coach Green calls Lange "our catalyst...the perfect example of what we look for in an Alabama volleyball player."

Michelle Green (no relation to the coach), who led the SEC with 572 kills as a junior, and Morales "are two of the best offensive threats ever to have played at Alabama," said the coach. Morales was second on the team in both blocks (98) and kills (419).

The other seniors are back-up performers. They are middle blocker Kelly Fash, opposite hitter Sarah Cotten, and defensive specialist Melissa Clark. Clark came to Bama as a walk-on and earned a scholarship two years ago.

Other returning starters for the Tide are 5-11 junior outside hitter Jen Wagner, 6-0 sophomore middle blocker Shelly Adamcik, and 6-1 soph middle blocker Emily Sebastian, a Mobile native who was the first Alabamian signed by Green.

Green calls Wagner the "best ball-handler in the SEC." Adamcik is the type player



Fifth-year senior Monica Morales, a 6-0, left-handed hitter, is one of the offensive leaders of this year's Alabama volleyball team. University of Alabama Photo by Kent Gidley

Green has been building the team with, players with height, but also good overall athletic ability. The coach said that people notice Adamcik because of her play in the middle (she had over 100 blocks in her

freshman year), but said "she is also a very good back row player." Sebastian is also a good blocker.

Other returning players are 5-10 junior defensive specialist Lexee Marshall (a defen-

sive specialist ordinarily plays when a middle blocker rotates to the back line, where athleticism is more necessary than height), 6-0 soph middle blocker Janet Golen, 6-1 soph opposite hitter Sarah Kreimer, 5-11 soph setter Bridget Studnicka, and 5-10 soph outside hitter Katherine Gaudet.

Every returning Tide player has started at least one match in her career.

There are two freshmen additions, both 6-2 opposite hitters, Erin Price and Jennifer Bibber.

Green said a rigorous spring schedule had enabled a number of back-up players to get valuable competition. As a result, she said, the Tide is four-deep at every position. "That lends me flexibility that I have never enjoyed before," she said.

Green's first Alabama team struggled to a 5-31 record and 1-14 mark in SEC games in 1996. In 1997 the record rose to 9-23 and in 1998 to 14-18 before Bama broke through with a .500-plus season last year.

"I feel like we're on the right track," she said. "We have a very solid balance of players and our hard work the past few years is about to pay off. We are excited about the level of success our program has achieved, but we are not content with just a winning season. We want to continue to raise the bar."

That starts with players, and Green has been adding talent each year. In fact, almost without meaning to do so, Green and her staff (Assistants John Rodgers and Michelle Durban) have recruited relatively tall players who are also excellent athletes.

"We're not the tallest team in the conference," Green said. "Arkansas (the SEC Western Division favorite) and South Carolina are the tallest. But we haven't sacrificed athleticism for height. We have both."

Alabama's athleticism has allowed Green to alter the offense over the past few years, going from a traditional "high outside" offense to a "swing" attack that takes advantage of the team's excellent outside hitters. She said, "We have the ability to hit from any zone." A key, she said, is that in order to use the offense the team must be good at passing, which she thinks Bama will be.

Green believes that her team is capable of competing with the best teams in the SEC, and that knowledge "should give our players confidence." The SEC is not the nation's strongest volleyball conference, ranking behind the Big 10, Pac-10 and Big 12, but SEC play is improving. Green noted that one commitment by SEC teams is to play

stronger schedules, pointing to her own team's early-season trip to Florida State as an example. That's one of at least a half dozen Alabama matches that will be televised regionally this season.

Although the players will be the same as in 1999, Green expects this Crimson Tide team to be different than last year. "I'm anxious to see the personality of this team," she said. Naturally, she expects it to be more mature." She points to the team overall grade point average of 3.52 as evidence of that maturity.

Green said in 1999 Alabama "established ourselves as a very good defensive team. Now we have to learn to compete at the highest level. That means our focus has to be better in practice."

The Tide coach has reason for high hopes. She said, "This is by far the most physically fit group of players I have had in my 15 years of coaching. They worked really hard in the off-season and it shows."

In the traditional mile run that precedes the start of fall practice in August, Green

said 10 of the 13 who were tested made their times, with Wagner turning in a mark under six minutes.

The coach said, "We have the talent and experience. It boils down to execution."

Green said, "This is a very mature, veteran group of players and that is one of our strengths this year. It will be nice to have players who are not forced to learn on the job this season. I am looking forward to this season and its possibilities."

The team was scheduled to host a Crimson & White public scrimmage on August 26 at 11:30 a.m. CDT. Alabama opens its regular season in the Big Four Challenge at UAB on September 1. The Tide will play South Alabama at UAB on September 2. Auburn is also in the season-opening event. The Tide's first home match will be September 12 against Southern Mississippi.

Because of a new floor being installed in the main arena of Coleman Coliseum, Alabama's home volleyball matches will be held in the annex gym at the rear of the coliseum through mid-October.



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Both Teams Seeking Fifth Runner

by Andrew Varble II

Men have many new faces; top women return

With its penchant for tradition, Alabama likes nothing more in its coaches and athletes than a proud heritage. And while his legacy hasn't run directly to the Crimson Tide until now, Joe Walker, the new cross country/distance coach for head coach Harvey Glance's men's team is a multiple legacy of the best kinds.

"I come from a family of coaches and teachers," Walker said. "My dad coached at Ole Miss for 12 years. Because of that, because I grew up in the conference, I have a lot of respect for the SEC's coaches and athletes."

In addition to having family ties to the sport and conference, Walker also competed at Ole Miss in the early 90s as part of one of the nation's best distance squads. A 1994



Joe Walker

Mississippi graduate, Walker was a four-time Academic All-SEC performer for the Rebels. He was a member of Ole Miss' world ranked 4x1500m squad in 1994 and finished his career with the third best 3,000m time in UM history.

After he finished his competitive career, Walker followed his father Joe, (Alabama's Walker is actually Joe III) into the coaching ranks becoming head coach of Meridian (Miss.) Community College's men and women's track and field programs. Success was immediate. He coached MCC to national team championships in cross country and indoor track and field. Before the end of his four-year stint, Walker coached the Eagles to 16 individual national championships and 74 All-American performances. For his efforts with Meridian, Walker was twice named National Indoor Championship Coach of the Meet.

In 1998, Walker moved to Alabama to become the distance/cross country coach at South Alabama. In his two-year tenure, he helped lead the Jaguars to several Sun Belt team titles. He also coached David Kimani to the 1999 NCAA Cross Country Championship. Kimani, along with Joseph Herring of Mobile, followed Walker to Alabama.

"This conference is so competitive," Walker said. "Every year you know you have to be at your best to be competitive, every year you have to be ready. I think if everything goes well, we could be set for another top 25 finish in cross country."

For Alabama, the addition of Kimani offsets the graduation of NCAA 3,000m steeplechase champion Tim Broe. Broe is

also an alternate in that event on the 2000 United States Olympic team.

"We lost one of the top three distance runners in the nation in Tim Broe," Walker said. "But we fill that position by bringing in Kimani. If we can get good performances out of Chris Mutai, Frank Rono and Japheth Koech, we should be really strong this year."

While Kimani, Mutai (an All-SEC and All-America last season), Rono and Koech give the Tide a strong top four for cross country, Walker knows that Alabama will only be as strong as its fifth competitor.

"I'm really looking forward to seeing who steps up and becomes that solid fifth runner," Walker said. "Joseph Herring, Troy Henderson and Matt Cutcliffe all have a chance to be that guy. Those three guys will be the key to how good we can be as a team."

Alabama finished third in the Southeastern Conference in 1999 and 23rd in the nation.

Alabama's women are under the watchful eye of Rachelle Roberts, in her fourth year with the Crimson Tide. Much like the men, Roberts has a good base in place, but is looking for someone to step up and grab the fifth spot in the lineup.

"In cross country, you are only as strong as your final competitor," Roberts said. "We need someone to be that fifth runner."

The injury bug played havoc with the Tide's last season, but most of the 1999 ailments have healed. Junior Ashley LaBudde earned All-SEC honors last season and will lead Alabama's cross country efforts this year. Sophomore Dawn Boggs also earned All-SEC last season, but may redshirt this year if her injury needs more time to heal. Redshirt junior Ally Mills returns ready to provide veteran leadership to a young squad. Freshman Janet Kogo and sophomore Bobette Stewart, who had a strong outdoor track season last spring, will fill out the third and fourth spot.

Freshman Vernetta Greene, a Parker High School graduate, won Alabama State titles in the 800m, 1600m and 3200m races last spring. Greene, along with newcomer Kara Nowak and sophomores Katie Braune and Katie Kelly will be battling for the fifth spot.

Despite the injuries, the women still finished in the top half at the SEC Championships in 1999, taking sixth. LaBudde and Boggs both competed at the NCAA Championships. The Tide's goal is to qualify the team for that event this season.

Both the men and women's program will benefit from a home schedule that includes not only the perennial Crimson Classic, but also the SEC Championships and the NCAA Regional Championships.

"Having the two championship meets at home is a real advantage," Roberts said. "We'll know every inch of the course which provides a nice level of comfort."

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Alabama Has Some Good Big Men

by James Edwards

State is particularly rich in tight end prospects

Sometimes it doesn't take great detective work to find good football players. There are times when a high school player is so accomplished that everyone knows he is a college prospect. Of course, there are others whose development is a guess.

This year, as usual, there is a large number of high school football players in the state of Alabama who will be playing college ball in years to come. Some experts believe that more Alabama prep players than ever before will have scholarship offers following the 2000 season.

It is important to remember that these prospects are determined by various publications and internet sites and this is NOT The University of Alabama recruiting list. And because a prospect lists a school as one he is considering, that does not necessarily mean the school is recruiting the player.

Here is a look at some of the top big men in the state. These linemen, linebackers and tight ends are considered the top prospects now. As the year progresses some will drop down and others will emerge. In subsequent issues we will feature the skill position players in Alabama, the big men from around the Southeast, and the skill position players in Dixie. These prospects are listed in alphabetical order by position.

Linebackers

Linebackers have traditionally been among those who have an opportunity to play early at the college level. It is believed that no fewer than 13 Alabama prep linebackers are currently on the various recruiting lists compiled by college coaches. Eight of those are universally considered prospects.

Tyler Baughn, outside linebacker, 6-3, 200, 4.8 (40-yard dash time) from Lynn High School, is the elite player on a Class A team with just 13 members. He can do it all. He passed for 1,115 yards and 15 touchdowns at quarterback, plus ran for 300 yards and eight more scores. Defensively he is a one



Lemarcus Rowell

man wrecking machine. He was credited with 188 tackles, two sacks, and six interceptions. He is a full qualifier who has camped at Alabama and Auburn. He lists Alabama, LSU, Auburn, Ole Miss, and Georgia.

Patrick Billings, outside linebacker, 6-3, 235, 4.55 from Hazlewood High School in Town Creek, plays quarterback on offense and is the catalyst of the team. He accounted for over 1,000 yards of offense as a junior while leading his team to the state semifinals. He will be more sought after on defense where he made approximately eight tackles per game. He is not yet qualified academically. He has his eyes on Mississippi State, Alabama, Auburn, Ole Miss, and Tennessee.

Pierre Brown, outside linebacker, 6-1, 215, 4.55 from Shades Valley High School in Irondale on the outskirts of Birmingham, follows a group that has included Alabama's Saleem Rasheed and Auburn's Mayo Sowell. Pierre is cut from the same cloth. He had 143 tackles, 21 tackles for loss, and nine sacks as a junior. He is focused on Auburn, Mississippi State, Alabama, Tennessee, and Ole Miss.

B. J. Dean, inside linebacker, 6-0, 230, 4.55 from Central High School in Tuscaloosa, reminds coaches of former Alabama star Derrick Oden. Dean, who bench presses 405, racked up 114 tackles as a junior and he is qualified. He has committed to Florida State, but look for Alabama and others to possibly make a late run to change his mind.

Avery Gibson, outside linebacker, 6-2, 218, 4.7 from Hoover High School in Birmingham, is a converted defensive back who will get his initiation at linebacker his senior year. He has proven as a safety that he can hold his own in the physical game. He had 97 tackles and four interceptions as a free safety. He is already qualified and is leaning to North Carolina State and Kentucky. He is also looking at Auburn, Mississippi State, Tennessee, and Ole Miss.

Leverne Johnson, inside linebacker, 6-0, 235, 4.75 from Walker High School in Jasper, was the dominant force on his state quarterfinals team. He had 147 tackles, 11 sacks, and an interception as a junior. He is already qualified and looking at Alabama, Auburn, Kentucky, Ole Miss, Mississippi State, and Tennessee.

Freddie Roach, outside linebacker, 6-3, 230, 4.55 from Brooks High School in Killen, is the second best prospect in North Alabama and perhaps the state's best combination linebacker/fullback. He could get playing time in college on either side. He made all-state as a junior while rushing for 1,285 yards and 13 touchdowns. On defense he had 152 tackles, 20 tackles for loss, and five blocked kicks. He is the half brother of former Tide receiver, Tim Bowens. He should qualify and he is eyeing Alabama, Mississippi State, Michigan, LSU, Ole Miss, and North Carolina State.

Lemarcus Rowell, outside linebacker, 6-4, 220, 4.45 from Opelika High School, is the state's best linebacker...and he was as a junior. Last year he had 156 tackles and was selected to the Super All-State team by *The Birmingham News*. He is a *Pigskin Preps* Super South 75. He favors Alabama over Auburn, LSU, FSU, Nebraska, Michigan, Penn State, and Georgia.

Other potential linebacker prospects this season are:

Lieutenant Dukes, 6-4, 200, 4.5, Birmingham Woodlawn; Martravis Gary, 6-1, 215, 4.8, Montgomery Sidney Lanier; Corteze Graves, 6-1, 220, 4.7, Birmingham Huffman; Kenneth Hollis, 6-1, 215, 4.5, Adamsville Minor; Tyus Jackson, 6-2, 230, 4.6, Birmingham Woodlawn; Chris Mason, 6-3, 218, 4.8, Cullman; Pete Pirtle, 6-4, 202, 4.7, Smiths Station; Jay Runyans, 6-2, 212, 4.7, Decatur Austin; and Zac Woodfin, 6-1, 225, 4.6, Prattville.

Offensive Linemen

Among those hard-to-find commodities are those players willing to play in the

trenches, opening up the holes for and protecting the more-heralded running backs and quarterbacks. Offensive linemen are essential to football success. Here are some in Alabama being watched by college recruiters.

Jon Cooper, center, 6-4, 262, 4.9 from Robert E. Lee High School in Montgomery, is probably the state's best at his specialized position. He can shot gun snap, call blocking schemes, and is quick enough to block linebackers. He graded 83 per cent blocking last year. He is qualified and considering just in-state schools: Alabama, Auburn, UAB, Troy State, Jacksonville State, and North Alabama.

Von Ewing, offensive tackle, 6-5, 297, 5.1 from Charles Henderson High School in Troy, is the number one offensive line prospect in the state. He has size, speed, quickness, strength, agility, and intelligence. He is dominant in the trenches, has the quickness to be able to pull and lead block, and did not allow a sack his junior year. He ranks among the state's top five prospects and is rated in the top ten offensive linemen in the South. He has committed to Alabama.

Antwarn Franklin, 6-5, 285, 5.1 from Woodlawn High School in Birmingham, is a quality defensive lineman who is projected as an offensive tackle in college. He has good movement, good feet, and is aggressive. He was credited with over 100 tackles and six sacks his junior year. He has already qualified and has an offer from Auburn.

Avery House, offensive tackle, 6-5, 285, 5.2 from Springville High School, is a drive blocker who has excellent strength. He graded 88 per cent blocking efficiency his junior year. He is academically qualified and is looking at Auburn, LSU, Georgia Tech, Alabama, and Kentucky.

Alan Klinner, offensive tackle, 6-4, 285, 5.2 from Vestavia Hills High School in Birmingham, uses his hands well, drives blocks, and has good technique. He plays for a successful program that teaches good blocking schemes. He was all-metro as a junior and he's academically qualified. He is looking at Alabama, Auburn, Vanderbilt, Ole Miss, and North Carolina State.

Mark Sanders, offensive tackle, 6-7, 305, 5.1 from Ashville High School, is the brother of present Alabama punter Matthew. Mark is a superb pass blocker who has displayed tremendous feet and good quickness. He was getting recruited by several schools but when Alabama offered, he accepted.

Others who could emerge as top offensive line prospects this year are:

Justin Barnett, 6-6, 310, 5.1, Brookwood;



Von Ewing

Taylor Britt, 6-4, 235, 5.0, Cullman; Michael Dansby, 6-5, 395, 5.8, Birmingham Ensley; Chadwick Motte, 6-3, 285, 5.0, Arab; Lucas Pate, 6-4, 290, 5.2, Mary Montgomery of Semmes; Michael Simmons, 6-5, 315, 5.6, Locust Fork; David Sprott, 6-5, 318, 5.2, Francis Marion; Brian Wilson, 6-3, 320, 5.2, Theodore; and Bakari Young, 6-2, 277, 5.0, Clay-Chalkville of Pinson.

Defensive Linemen

Although defensive linemen in high school sometimes end up as offensive linemen in college, it's not because there are so many good defensive linemen available. In fact, that is one position where it is very difficult to find quality players. However, here are four who appear to be likely prospects:

Tony Bonds, defensive tackle, 6-3, 280, 4.95 from Russellville High School, finished second on his team in tackles with 60 and also had a pair of sacks as a junior. He is also a fine offensive guard on offense. He is already qualified and is considering Michigan State (offer), Tennessee, Southern Miss, Alabama, and Auburn.

McKinley Boykin, defensive tackle, 6-1, 260, 4.7 from McAdory High School in McCalla, near Birmingham, lacks the height usually associated with a defensive line prospect. But he is a prospect after a junior year in which he had 127 tackles, 12 tackles for loss, nine sacks, and 22 quarterback pressures. He has very good strength and should qualify. He has interest in Auburn, LSU, Southern Miss, Mississippi State, and North Carolina State.

Melvin Oliver, defensive end, 6-4, 245, 4.75 from Opelika High School, has all the tools. Last year he had 121 tackles, 17 sacks, and 15 tackles for loss. He has good strength

and should qualify. He is favoring Georgia Tech, LSU, and Michigan over Arkansas, Auburn, Alabama, Southern Miss, Nebraska, and Florida.

Reggie Weeks, defensive end, 6-5, 280, 4.9 from Smiths Station High School, is considered a "sleeper" by some, but is drawing attention from big-time programs. As a junior he had 39 tackles, six tackles for loss, and five sacks. He has very good strength and will qualify. He has an interest in Clemson, Alabama, Tennessee, Georgia Tech, Auburn, South Carolina, and Kentucky.

Other possibilities:

Todd Bates, 6-5, 235, 4.7, Cleburne County of Heflin; Matthew Batusic, 6-2, 255, 4.9, Hoover of Birmingham; Frank Carter, 6-1, 277, 4.9, Birmingham Ensley; Randal Gibson, 6-0, 265, 4.6, Aliceville; Taurean Robinson, 6-4, 300, 5.0, Birmingham Hoover; Eric Scott, 6-2, 275, 5.2, Scottsboro; Payton Sides, 6-3, 220, 4.8, Jasper Walker County; Solie White, 6-2, 235, 4.75, Theodore; Jason Williams, 6-3, 260, 4.85, Foley; and Josh Wilson, 6-4, 230, 4.8, Lynn.

Tight Ends

This could be called "The Year of the Tight End" in Alabama. There are no fewer than six top prospects at this position, which is increasing in importance as an offensive weapon. The top prep seniors in Alabama are:

Ronnie Aldridge, 6-5, 250, 4.87 from Lawrence County High School in Moulton, possesses very good hands and is also a strong blocker. He snagged passes for 240 yards and seven touchdowns as a junior, while blocking at an 86 per cent clip with 24 pancakes. He already has an offer from Mississippi State, and is also looking at UAB, Alabama, Auburn, and Tennessee.

Sam Dudley, 6-3, 255, 4.75 from Central High School in Tuscaloosa, took over at tight end when Brandon Washington moved to defensive tackle. He is a very strong blocker with soft hands. He caught 14 passes for 145 yards and three touchdowns as a junior, but he was also tagged with 35 pancake blocks. He is leaning to Georgia Tech over Kentucky, LSU, Alabama, and Auburn.

Cedric Hampton, 6-3, 246, 4.8 from Courtland High School, is considered the state's best tight end. He has lined up at tight end, defensive end, linebacker, offensive line, fullback, and tailback in high school. He moved to tailback the final minutes of the state championship game and led his team to the game-winning score in four plays. He is a solid blocker and a good receiver. He caught 31 passes for 732 yards

and seven touchdowns as a junior, while rushing for 462 yards and four touchdowns on just 47 carries. Defensively he had 87 tackles and six sacks. He also is a three time all-state tournament team selection in basketball and was the state runner-up to Anthony Bryant (Alabama signee) in the shot put. He has Alabama and Tennessee as his leaders followed by Michigan, Notre Dame, Auburn, Nebraska, South Carolina, Ole Miss, Kentucky, Georgia, Florida, and Louisville.

Clint Johnston, 6-4, 235, 4.75 from Wetumpka High School, has the physical appearance of a body builder. He plays on a team that predominantly runs the football. He did have nine receptions for 150 yards and one score, but it is his blocking ability that has gained him fame. He is already qualified and has bloodlines to Alabama. His father (Johnny) and uncle (Donny) both laced them up for the Tide. He favors Alabama and Southern Miss over LSU, Georgia, and Vanderbilt.

Justin Tuck, 6-5, 210, 4.6 from Coosa Central High School in Rockford, will find himself either at tight end or outside



Brandon Washington

linebacker in college. He has the ability to play quickly at either slot, but he may have to add more weight to play at a high level in college. He caught 38 passes for 532 yards and nine touchdowns as a junior, while defensively he had 104 tackles, 15 tackles for

loss, and eight sacks. He is the cousin of former Southern Miss star Adalius Thomas (now with the Baltimore Ravens). He is qualified. He is taking a look at Alabama, Auburn, Georgia Tech, Southern Miss, and Mississippi State.

Brandon Washington, 6-4, 283, 4.88 from Central High School in Tuscaloosa, is the state's best tight end prospect, but also a dominating defensive tackle prospect. He moved to defense his junior year and he showed an incredibly quick first step. He caught three passes for 77 yards and one touchdown before moving from tight end. He had 59 tackles and five sacks as a defender. He bench presses 420 and is qualified. He committed to Alabama early over LSU (offered as soph), Auburn, Mississippi State, and Southern Miss.

Other potential tight end prospects are:

Tory Davis, 6-4, 230, 4.8, Prattville; Dustin Dunning, 6-5, 210, 4.85, Birmingham Hoover; Matt Golden, 6-2, 240, 4.95, Decatur; Chris Landrum, 6-4, 235, 5.0, Thompson of Alabaster; Blake Norrell, 6-3, 215, 4.8, Tallassee; and Patrick Quinn, 6-5, 225, 4.8, Anniston Walter Wellborn.

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BAMA SCORECARD

Not Waiting

Reggie Cordy, a 6-3, 288-pound center from Dublin, Georgia, signed with Alabama's football team last February, but because of the high number of signees earning academic eligibility Cordy was asked to wait until January to join the Tide. However, Cordy elected to not wait. He has accepted a scholarship offer with Georgia Southern instead.

Baseball Losses And Gains

The Alabama baseball team has suffered some unexpected losses this year, the latest the Tide's top pitcher, right-hander Scott Murphy. Murphy, who won 16 games for Bama in his first two seasons including an 8-2 mark last spring as a sophomore, asked for his release in August, just before the start of school. He is expected to be at Georgia this year. He is considered a possible first round Major League draft choice next spring.

He is the sixth defection from Alabama's 2000 team, the fourth to transfer to another school. Outfielders Ben King (Texas) and Erik Smallwood (South Alabama), catcher Rock Mills (Pepperdine) are the other transfers. Right-handed pitcher Kevin Marzion quit the team early in the season and junior left-hander Jonathan Blankenship, a 10-game winner in 1999, unexpectedly signed a free agent contract with the New York Yankees. And that doesn't include outfielder Derek Wigginton, a starter on the Tide's 1999 College World Series team, who quit just prior to the start of last season (and who was drafted in the 13th round by the Chicago White Sox).

On the plus side, Alabama has added two more quality recruits, pitcher Clint Kelley (6-3, 210) and first baseman/outfielder Ty Harper (6-3, 215). Kelley comes to Alabama from Okaloosa-Walton Community College, where he compiled a 2.22 ERA and struck out 60 batters in 50 innings last season. Okaloosa-Walton is the same school that produced Bryce Heath, the Tide's relief ace last season. Kevin Berry, the pitching coach at Okaloosa-Walton, is former Wells assistant coach at Alabama (1995). Harper is a power-hitting first baseman from Golden West College in Huntington Beach, California. A two-time Most Valuable Player, Harper batted .550 as a junior college freshman and hit .530 last year as a sophomore.

Good Summer

Jeremy Brown, a junior who will likely catch and play first base for the Alabama baseball team next spring, had a fantastic summer for Northern Ohio in the Great Lakes League. Brown, who prepared for the spring by playing both first base and catcher in the summer league, batted .391 with 10 home runs and 47 runs batted in and led his team to a 42-9 record and the regu-

lar season and playoff championships.

However, it may be the best thing for Brown this summer was something that didn't happen. Neither he nor new Tide pitcher Mark Carter was injured in an automobile accident in Tennessee when the two were returning to Alabama from summer league play.

It has also been a good summer for former Tide first baseman Joe Vitiello. He was named Most Valuable Player in the Triple A All-Star Game as he went three-for-three including a double and a triple, scored three runs and drove in two runs in his team's 8-1 win. Later Vitiello was promoted to the major leagues and had hit a couple of home runs for San Diego.

Basketball Scholars

Mark Gottfried said on the day he was hired as Alabama's head basketball coach that graduating his players and seeing his players succeed in the classroom was every bit as important as winning championships, and it appears he's living up to that promise. Two of his current players, Jeremy Hays and Alfred Moss, collected their undergraduate degrees with Hays graduating in May with a degree in management and Moss graduating in August with a degree in communications. Both graduated in four years and both will be working toward a second degree as they play their fifth and final seasons at Alabama. (Moss was a partial qualifier when he arrived and has thus earned his fifth year. Hays was a medical redshirt last season.)

And Alabama is on pace to write its own record in March. Four Tide players will likely be named Academic All-Southeastern Conference, an award which requires a minimum 3.0 grade point average. The list includes Hays, Tarik London, Travis Stinnett, and Jim Bakken.

Hobbs To Kentucky

Former Alabama Head Basketball Coach David Hobbs has been named an assistant coach under Tubby Smith at Kentucky. Hobbs and Smith served as assistant coaches together at Virginia Commonwealth University under J.D. Barnett. After coaching on the Rams' staff for six years (1980-85), Hobbs joined Alabama as an assistant coach. He spent six years on Wimp Sanderson's staff as the Crimson Tide won one SEC Championship, four SEC Tournament crowns and advanced to the NCAA Tournament Sweet 16 four times.

When Sanderson left following the 1992 season, Hobbs was named head coach. In his first season, the Tide finished 16-13 and advanced to the NIT. In 1994 and 1995, Alabama recorded 20-win seasons and advanced to the NCAA Tournament behind the play of current Olympian Antonio McDyess. In 1996, Bama fell to 19-13 and a

berth in the NIT Final Four.

He resigned his post following the 1998 season after compiling a 110-76 (59.4 per cent) career record and producing nine All-SEC players.

Boo Barnes Back

Yalika "Boo" Barnes, who was dismissed from Alabama's women's basketball team last year after doing poorly academically, has been readmitted to the squad. It hasn't been easy for Barnes who was earlier suspended for "a bad attitude" after transferring from Trinity Valley Community College in Texas. The Montgomery native took out a student loan and did well in summer school (A grades in calculus, legal studies and nutrition, a B in macroeconomics), regained her eligibility, and was returned to scholarship status by Head Coach Rick Moody.

Olympic Spots

Former Tide basketball star Antonio McDyess, now playing in the NBA for Denver, has been added to the United States team for the Sydney Olympic Games. McDyess was put on the team to replace the injured Tim Duncan. The team was to begin practice in Maui beginning August 26.

McDyess starred for the Tide in 1994 and 1995, then declared himself eligible for the draft and was the second overall pick.

Alabama softball star Kelly Kretschman, who spent an on-again, off-again spring and summer wondering about her place on the United States team, was finally made a permanent alternate player for the squad.

Although falling just short in bids to make the team, Tide swimmers and divers did well in Olympic Trials. Junior Marcy Warriner had career best marks in the 100 and 200 breaststroke events. Sophomore Charles Reeves, senior Emily Donohue and recent graduate Brooke Donoho also performed well in the swimming events. Former Tide star and two-time Olympian Jon Olsen fell short in his bid for a third Olympics berth.

Soph diver Lane Bassham was eighth in 10-meter competition despite being one of the youngest women in competition. Former Tide diver Brent Roberts just missed a spot on the team with a fourth place finish in 10-meter.

Spring Sports Playing

Although college golf and tennis are traditionally spring sports, there are limited fall events, including some this month.

Alabama's men's golf team will play in the College of Charleston Invitational at Kiawah Island, South Carolina, September 11-12 and in the University of Minnesota Invitational in Minneapolis September 18-19. The women's team will play in the Auburn Tiger Invitational September 8-10 and in the FSU Lady Seminole at Sandestin

Resort in Destin, Florida, September 29-October 1.

The men's tennis team will play in the Clay Court Nationals in Baltimore September 15-20 and in the Harvard Invitational in Boston September 22-24.

The women's tennis team will again play host to the Roberta Alison Fall Classic. The three-day tournament (September 22-24) is one of the most prestigious in the nation.

Bama's baseball team will be practicing and playing weekend intrasquad games that are open to the public.

Golf Success

Alabama golfers had excellent summer results. Two-time national junior college champion Nick Rousey, a native of Pensacola, Florida, who played at Central Alabama Community College, was a member of the United States team in the World University Golf Championships, played at Castlerock, Ireland. This summer he also finished second in the Alabama State Amateur, won the Country Club of Birmingham Invitational, and earned a spot in the United States Amateur at Pebble Beach in California.

Bama women's team members also did very well. Three Tide women took championships in summer play. Sarah Johnston won the Women's Southern Amateur, while Paula Carter won the Tennessee Amateur and Lacy Shelton the Alabama Amateur. (An irony in Shelton's victory was that along the way she was paled with Tide Head Coach Betty Palmer.)

Carter and Johnston both participated in the U.S. Amateur Championship in Portland, Oregon, this summer and both survived the 36-hole medal play competition and one round of match play before being eliminated.

A couple of former players also had noteworthy professional victories. Former Tide golfer Spike McRoy pocketed \$90,000 on July 30 when he won the Buy.com Dakota Dunes Open in Dakota Dunes, S.D. It was McRoy's biggest check in his nine years as a pro. That win, combined with the \$77,250 he had already won during the year placed him sixth on Buy.com Tour's money list, an important step since the top 15 on the Buy.com money list automatically get their PGA Tour cards. McRoy has twice possessed his PGA Tour card.

And Jason Bohn, best remembered as a walk-on member of the Bama golf team who won a million dollars in a hole-in-one contest (and had to give up college play as that made him a professional) a few years ago, recently won a professional event in Canada, the oddly-named "Payless Open."

More CoSIDA Awards

Several members of Alabama's media relations office were awarded honors at this year's College Sports Information Directors of America convention. In addition to those announced earlier, Becky Hopf was named for 1999 football program stories on Shaun Alexander and Cornelius Griffin and for a story on Alabama basketball players reflecting on their memories of Thanksgiving.

2000 Alabama Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time (TV)*	Site
Sept. 2	UCLA	2:30 (ABC)	Pasadena
Sept. 9	Vanderbilt	11:30 (J-P)	Birmingham
Sept. 16	Southern Mississippi	8:00 (ESPN2)	Birmingham
Sept. 23	Arkansas	8:00 (ESPN2)	Fayetteville
Sept. 30	South Carolina	TBA	Tuscaloosa
Oct. 14	Mississippi	6:00 (ESPN)	Tuscaloosa
Oct. 21	Tennessee	2:30 (CBS)	Knoxville
Oct. 28	Central Florida (HC)	2:00	Tuscaloosa
Nov. 4	LSU	2:30 (CBS)	Baton Rouge
Nov. 11	Mississippi State	TBA	Starkville
Nov. 18	Auburn	2:30 (CBS)	Tuscaloosa

Southeastern Conference Championship Game

Dec. 2	TBA	TBA (ABC)	Atlanta
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*Central time. Some times and television may change.

Volleyball

Date	Opponent	Central Time
Big Four Challenge @ Birmingham		
Sept. 4	UAB	7:00
Sept. 2	South Alabama	5:00
Sept. 4	@ Florida State	6:30
UNLV Invitational @ Las Vegas		
Sept. 8	San Jose State	10:00 a.m.
Sept. 8	UNLV	5:30
Sept. 9	Boise State	12:30
Sept. 9	Idaho State	5:30
Sept. 12	Southern Miss	7:00
Blue Demon Invitational @ Chicago		
Sept. 15	Providence	10:00 a.m.
Sept. 15	Central Michigan	4:00
Sept. 16	Valparaiso	12:00
Sept. 16	DePaul	7:00
Sept. 19	Samford	7:00
Sept. 22	@ Florida	6:00
Sept. 24	@ Georgia	1:00
Sept. 29	Arkansas	7:00
Oct. 1	LSU	2:00
Oct. 6	@ Ole Miss	7:00
Oct. 8	@ Mississippi State	2:00
Oct. 13	South Carolina	7:00
Oct. 15	@ Georgia State	1:00
Oct. 20	Tennessee	7:00
Oct. 22	Kentucky	2:00
Oct. 27	Auburn	7:00
Oct. 30	@ Auburn	7:00
Nov. 3	@ LSU	7:00
Nov. 5	@ Arkansas	1:30
Nov. 10	Mississippi State	7:00
Nov. 12	Ole Miss	2:00
Nov. 16	SEC Championships	
Nov. 19	@ Gainesville	

Soccer

Date	Opponent	Central Time
Aug. 25	Louisiana-Monroe	7:00
Aug. 27	Southern Miss	1:00
	Bama Classic	
Sept. 1	Jacksonville State	7:00
Sept. 3	Miami	1:00
Sept. 8	@ Oklahoma State	7:00
Sept. 10	@ Oklahoma	1:00
Sept. 15	@ TCU	4:00
Sept. 17	@ Texas	1:00
Sept. 22	New Mexico	7:00
Sept. 24	Northern Arizona	1:00
Sept. 29	Kentucky	7:00
Oct. 1	Vanderbilt	1:00
Oct. 6	Ole Miss	7:00
Oct. 8	Mississippi State	1:00
Oct. 13	@ LSU	7:00
Oct. 15	@ Arkansas	1:00
Oct. 20	@ Florida	7:00
Oct. 22	@ South Carolina	4:00
Oct. 27	Wofford	7:00
Oct. 29	@ Auburn	1:00
Nov. 2-	SEC Championships	
Nov. 5	@ Athens, Georgia	

Cross Country

Date	Meet
Sept. 8	Tulane Invitational @ New Orleans
Sept. 16	Crimson Classic
Sept. 30	Iona Meet of Champions @ Bronx, New York (men)
Oct. 7	Auburn Invitational (women)
Oct. 14	Iowa State Invitational @ Ames, Iowa
Oct. 30	SEC Championships
Nov. 11	NCAA District IX
Nov. 20	NCAA Championships @ Ames, Iowa

Schedules of Alabama's 2000 Football Opponents

Team	Sept. 2	Sept. 9	Sept. 16	Sept. 23	Sept. 30	Oct. 7	Oct. 14	Oct. 21	Oct. 28	Nov. 4	Nov. 11	Nov. 18	Nov. 25
UCLA Bruins Los Angeles, Calif. (Alabama leads series, 1-0)	ALABAMA ABC-TV 12:30PDT	Fresno State	Michigan	@ Oregon	Arizona State		@ California	Oregon State	@ Arizona	Stanford	@ Washington	Southern Cal	
VANDERBILT Commodores Nashville, Tenn. (Alabama leads series, 55-18-4)	Miami (Ohio)	@ ALABAMA (Birmingham) JP-TV 11:30CDT	Ole Miss	Duke	@ Auburn	@ Wake Forest	@ Georgia	South Carolina		Florida	@ Kentucky		Tennessee (Adelphi)
SOUTHERN MISS Golden Eagles Hattiesburg, Miss. (Alabama leads series, 30-4-2)	@ Tennessee		@ ALABAMA (Birmingham) ESPN-2 8:00 CDT	@ Oklahoma State	Memphis	South Florida	@ Tulane		@ Houston	Louisville	@ UAB	@ Cincinnati	Nov. 24 East Carolina
ARKANSAS Razorbacks Fayetteville, Ark. (Alabama leads series, 7-3-0)	SW Missouri St (Little Rock)		Boise State (Little Rock)	ALABAMA ESPN-2 8:00 CDT	Georgia	Louisiana-Monroe	@ South Carolina		@ Auburn	Ole Miss	@ Tennessee	@ Mississippi State	Nov. 24 LSU (Little Rock)
SOUTH CAROLINA Gamecocks Columbia, S.C. (Alabama leads series, 9-0-0)	New Mexico State	Georgia	Eastern Michigan	Mississippi State	@ ALABAMA (Tuscaloosa) TBA	@ Kentucky	Arkansas	@ Vanderbilt	Tennessee		@ Florida	@ Clemson	
OLE MISS Rebels Oxford, Miss. (Alabama leads series, 38-7-2)	Tulane	Auburn	@ Vanderbilt		Kentucky	Arkansas State	@ ALABAMA (Tuscaloosa) ESPN 6:00 CDT		UNLV	@ Arkansas	LSU	@ Georgia	Nov. 23 Mississippi State
TENNESSEE Volunteers Knoxville, Tenn. (Alabama leads series, 42-33-7)	Southern Miss		Florida	Louisiana-Monroe	@ LSU	@ Georgia		ALABAMA CBS TV 3:30 CDT	@ South Carolina	@ Memphis	Arkansas	Kentucky	@ Vanderbilt (Adelphi)
CENTRAL FLORIDA Knights Orlando, Fla. (First Meeting)	@ Georgia Tech	Northwestern State	@ Akron	William & Mary	@ Eastern Michigan	@ Northern Illinois	Eastern Kentucky	Louisiana-Monroe	@ ALABAMA (Tuscaloosa) 2:00 CDT	@ Louisiana Tech	Virginia Tech		
LSU Fighting Tigers Baton Rouge, La. (Alabama leads series, 40-16-5)	Western Carolina	Houston	@ Auburn	UAB	Tennessee	@ Florida	Kentucky	Mississippi State	@ Ole Miss	ALABAMA CBS-TV 2:30 CDT	@ Ole Miss		Nov. 24 Arkansas (Little Rock)
MISSISSIPPI STATE Bulldogs Starkville, Miss. (Alabama leads series, 67-14-3)	Memphis		Sept. 14 @ BYU	@ South Carolina	Florida	Auburn		@ LSU	Middle Tennessee	@ Kentucky	ALABAMA TBA	Arkansas	Nov. 23 @ Ole Miss
AUBURN Tigers Auburn, Ala. (Alabama leads series, 37-26-1)	Aug. 31 Wyoming	@ Ole Miss	LSU	Northern Illinois	Vanderbilt	@ Mississippi State	@ Florida	Louisiana Tech	Arkansas		Georgia	@ ALABAMA CBS-TV TBA	

SEC Championship Game Saturday, December 2, at the GeorgiaDome in Atlanta, ABC-TV, kickoff time to be announced



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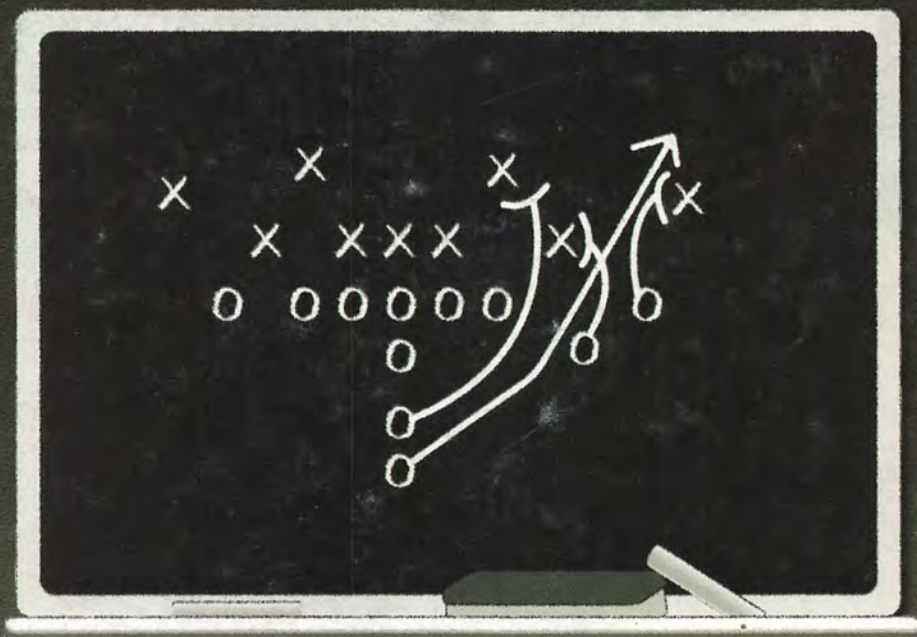
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